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Simplify Your Life With Technology



Photo
Organization Tips

Our **Favorite**
Finds From CES

February 2006
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The **Flat Panel**
Primer



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THEY GOT THEIRS. WHAT'S STOPPING YOU?

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* GB equals one billion bytes. ** Actual recording time will vary depending upon picture quality selected.

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feature topic

Simplify With Technology

Simplicity is in: That's the word from fashion and home décor, but it goes further than that. Since the mid-1990s, we've seen a major movement toward an unobtrusive and uncomplicated lifestyle, as well. But for those of us who like technology and all the great products that go along with it, that simple life might not be so easy to manage, right? That may have been the case a few years ago, but lately, CE devices are not only simpler themselves, but they also lead to a simpler, less cluttered life, as well.

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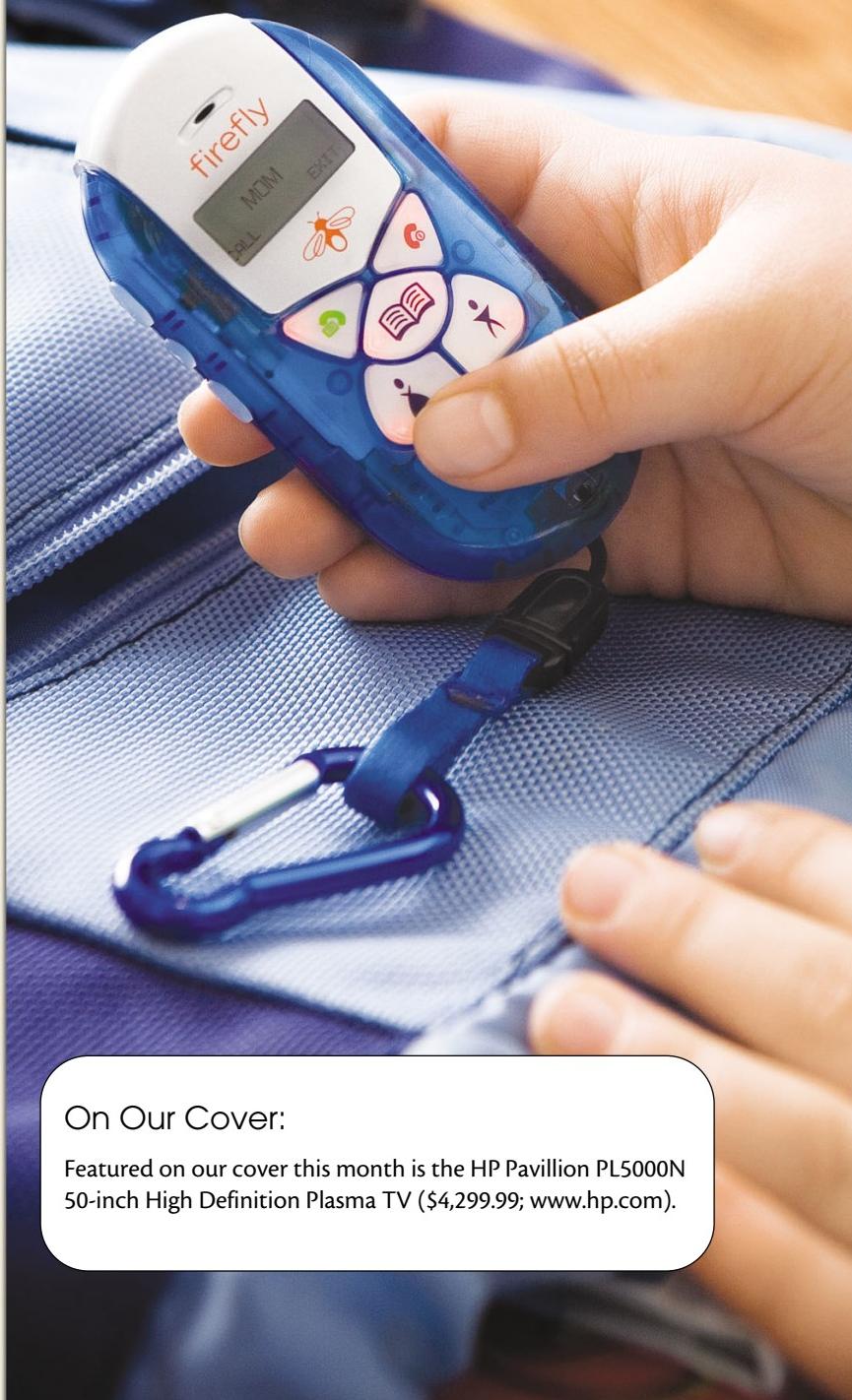
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On Our Cover:

Featured on our cover this month is the HP Pavilion PL5000N 50-inch High Definition Plasma TV (\$4,299.99; www.hp.com).

Open

There's always something new, interesting, and stylish happening in the world of consumer electronics. That's why the Open section packs the latest news and trends into the first few pages of *CE Lifestyles*, along with the sparkle and bling that you can buy to accessorize your devices.

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A/V Club

Some of our favorite electronic gadgets are the ones that provide the sounds and pictures that move and entertain us and our friends and family. Whether you want to put together a wireless audio system for your home or just want help using the plasma TV in your living room, A/V Club can help.

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Digital Studio

Digital cameras and camcorders are changing the way we record the moments of our lives, from quick snapshots of favorite vacation spots to priceless video clips of first steps and other important milestones. Get to know your new digicam or camcorder and learn what to do with your photos and video once you have them.

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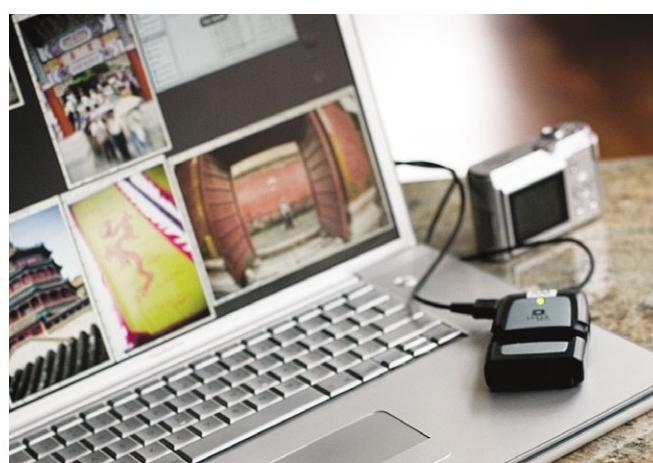
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Record History



CE @Home

The consumer electronics in our homes are no longer limited to TVs and DVD players. Smart appliances, home automation, and whole-house audio systems are becoming more and more common and affordable for families, and with so much available, why check CE at the door?

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CE Lite

Most CE devices are all about fun. Here, we'll tell you about the latest albums and films to catch, so you can make sure your entertainment is as up-to-date as your gear. Also, read what real women just like you are saying about how consumer electronics are affecting their everyday lives.

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Editor's Note

It seems counterintuitive to talk about simplicity in a consumer electronics magazine because so often we blame TV, computers, and the Internet for the rampant materialism that is so prevalent in our society.

However, there is good in everything, and, as this month's feature package shows, CE devices can greatly simplify our lives if we use them in the right ways. For example, in my own home, my husband and I scan documents such as bank statements and utility bills, save them on our PC, and burn backup copies onto CD, so we can shred and recycle the paper copies. For us, it's much easier to track and record everything electronically than it is to organize hundreds of sheets of paper in a filing cabinet. This system might not be for everyone, but for us, it's one way we've used consumer electronics to streamline a part of our daily lives.

And the mere sense of simplicity has a wonderfully calming effect on many of us, which is why we so often hear phrases such as "clean lines" when talking about home decor. Gone are the days of huge speakers made of hunks of metal and wood and TVs that take up half of your living room. Now we've got small, unobtrusive speakers that produce amazing sound, as well as flat-panel TVs that are so beautiful they're almost works of art for our walls.

When things are simple, they make life easier, and when life is easier, we have more time to enjoy it and each other. It's truly a lifestyle transformation to make a conscious effort to simplify; with technology, that change is easier than you might think.

Live well, friends.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Sommer".

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open

ce news

COMPILED BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

TEXAS SUES Sony BMG Over CD Spyware



Texas has sued Sony BMG Music Entertainment (www.sonybmg.com) under the state's anti-spyware law because the music label's CDs installed spyware on the personal computers of unsuspecting consumers. Sony BMG has admitted putting XCP software, a copyright-protection program, on millions of its music CDs. Texas Attorney General Greg Abbot is seeking \$100,000 for each spyware violation.

The company has pulled those discs from the market and has stated that customers who bought CDs loaded with XCP can exchange them for the same CDs without the software. In addition, Sony BMG is working on the release of an uninstall program for customers to use to delete files that the XCP program may have left on their computers.

XCP contains a rootkit that can alter a user's PC settings and render them vulnerable to viruses. The XCP-laden CDs from Sony BMG only affected consumers' PCs, not CD or DVD players.



Consumers Give Carrier Stores Low Marks

A poll conducted by The NPD Group (www.npd.com) reveals that, although 68% of all consumers who buy mobile phones do so at carrier-owned stores, only 24% of the buyers report having an excellent or good shopping experience at those stores. Conversely, customers who bought their cell phones at general merchandisers or electronics retailers were much more likely to say they were satisfied with their overall shopping experience. RadioShack and Wal-Mart scored the highest among those retailers.

Nextel and Cingular ranked the highest among carrier-owned stores, while T-Mobile and Sprint scored the lowest.

Of the consumers surveyed, only 14% were first-time subscribers to a wireless phone service. Most had bought a phone to replace their current (39%) or broken (15%) one.

... only 24%
of the buyers
report having
an excellent or
good shopping
experience ...

Kodak Debuts New Photo Kiosks

► Look for a new Kodak photo kiosk at a retailer near you. Late last year, Kodak (www.kodak.com) unveiled the new Kodak Picture Kiosk G4, a step up from its popular Picture Maker kiosk. The G4 contains a processor that doubles the speed at which images are uploaded from memory cards. Using thermal dye-sublimation Kodak photo printers (models 6850 and 8800), the new Kiosk can print 4- x 6-inch prints in as little as four seconds and 8- x 10-inch prints in less than 40 seconds. In addition, the G4 is about half the size of the Picture Maker.

There are more than 70,000 Kodak photo kiosks operating in retail locations around the world.

Comparison Shop With Your Cell Phone

► Someday soon comparison shopping may be as simple as scanning a product's UPC with your cell phone. New York-based Scanbuy (www.scanbuy.com) has developed Optical Intelligence, a technology that can turn mobile phones, PDAs, and Web cameras into optical scanners. Using a cell phone equipped with a digital camera and Scanbuy's ScanZOOM software, you could scan a UPC and use your phone's Web browser to download information linked to the product via the code.

Users of 16 cell phone models, including units from Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Siemens, and PalmOne, can download a free trial version of ScanZOOM (www.scanzoom.com). The software lets you view information about products from PriceGrabber.com and Amazon.com (books only).

Though the technology is still in its early stages, Scanbuy hopes manufacturers of cell phones will incorporate Optical Intelligence into their phones. According to an Associated Press report, a few thousand phones in the United States are equipped with Optical Intelligence on a trial basis.



Clark, Texas, Renames Itself "Dish"

► In the November 2005 CE News, we reported that EchoStar Communications, which owns Dish Network, was offering free, basic satellite service for 10 years to the residents of any U.S. town that would rename itself "Dish."

According to the Associated Press, the two-member town council of Clark, Texas—a short drive north of Dallas—agreed to the offer, and the 55 homes of Dish will reap the benefits, which amount to roughly \$4,500 in service and equipment per home from EchoStar.

UPDATE

Five Technologies To Watch In 2006

► The annual "Technologies To Watch" report, issued by the CEA (Consumer Electronics Association), lists five technology trends that are positioned to influence the CE industry. The technologies to watch in 2006 are:

1. Recordable HD content
2. Domestic robotics
3. The digital home studio
4. Interactive gaming
5. Innovative TV displays



The report also includes a section on emerging technologies:

Hydrogen fuel cells for portable products and RFID (radio frequency identification) chips are two such technologies mentioned in this year's report.

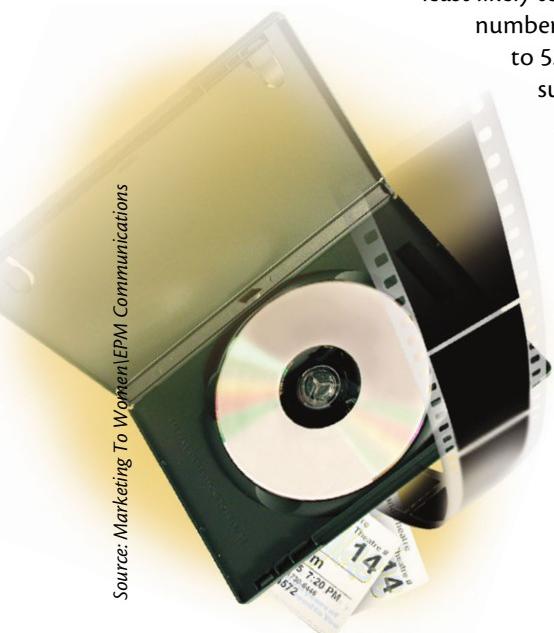
Source: CEA

DVD Viewing On The Rise As Movie Attendance Declines

Overall attendance at movie theaters across the United States is declining, according to a new study by OTX Research (www.otxresearch.com), particularly among the males-under-25 demographic coveted by studios and advertisers. Young men watched an average of 6.8 movies in summer 2005, down from 8.9 movies in summer 2003.

Attendance also dropped among women over 25, the demographic already least likely to go out to see a movie: Their average number of movies viewed in theaters dropped to 5.5 in summer 2005, down from 6.4 in summer 2003. However, older women rate going to the movies as a more enjoyable experience than the other groups.

Meanwhile, the number of DVD movies viewed throughout the year has risen sharply in the same time frame in all age and gender groups.



Source: Marketing To Women/EPN Communications

Average Number Of Movies Seen On DVD

	2003	2005
Males under 25	30	47
Males over 25	29	41
Females under 25	32	46
Females over 25	27	38

Sales of CE goods on Black Friday increased more than any other category from the previous year, with 36.7% of shoppers buying electronics.

Source: National Retail Federation

SIRIUS Satellite Radio has added Martha Stewart Living Radio (channel 112) to its programming lineup.

Source: SIRIUS

U.S. sales of accessories for portable digital players totaled \$412 million in the first nine months of 2005, an increase of 370% from the same time frame in 2004.

Source: NPD Techworld

8% of U.S. homes use a DVR, a number expected to grow to 39% by 2010.

Source: Reuters

TV viewers in homes with a DVR watch 5.7 hours of TV a day, compared to 5.1 hours of viewing in homes without a DVR.

Source: Nielsen Media Research

The DVD format makes up 22% of the camcorder market, a 100% increase from a year ago.

Source: The NPD Group

Global shipments of networking-capable CE products will grow from 21.2 million units in 2005 to 154.5 million in 2009, according to iSuppli.

Source: TWICE

Three million light vehicles in North America will have satellite TV by 2011, according to a report by Frost & Sullivan.

Source: TWICE



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BY GREGORY ANDERSON

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This is a great season to get outdoors and explore the various winter wonderlands. These new products for women on the go will help you get the most out of every adventure.



Magellan RoadMate 800

\$999 • www.magellangps.com

The latest portable GPS navigation system from Magellan provides maps and directions, to be sure. But it also stores and plays music or photos when you aren't navigating over the river and through the woods. And its rechargeable battery (for when you're not in the car) will get you through the whole visit to Grandmother's house.



Motorola V557

\$149.99 • www.motorola.com

Keep an eye on the weather from the slopes with Motorola's latest handheld, which uses the MEdia Net Live Ticker and Cingular service. Weather, traffic, and news update live and automatically on the screen, so you can always get the latest info at a glance, no matter where you are.

iRobot Scooba\$399.99 • www.irobot.com

The Roomba vacuum was one of the first self-powered carpet cleaners. But those of us with wood or tile floors were still stuck at home, pushing around a mop. Enter the Scooba Floor Washing Robot. The Scooba vacuums, scrubs, and dries all of your hard-surface floors automatically, freeing you, of course, for the demanding work of snow angels and ice skating.

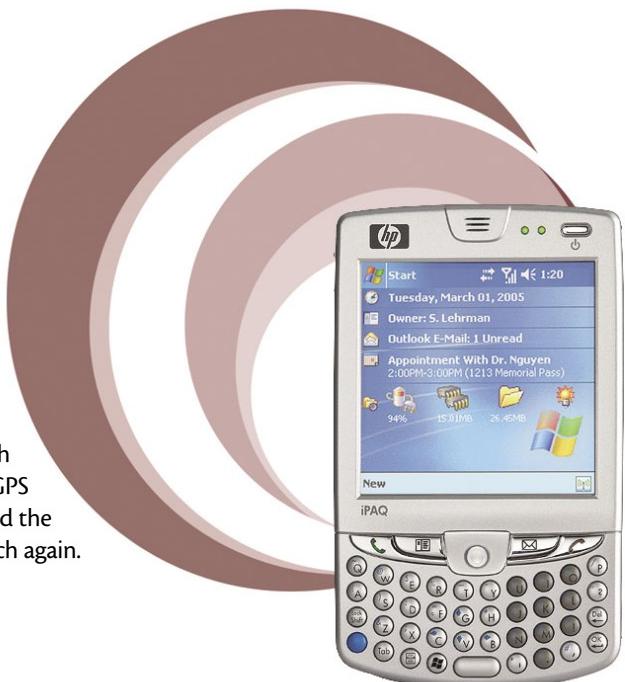
**ARCHOS Gmini 402 Camcorder**\$399.95 • www.archos.com

The latest Gmini media player is more than just an audio and video playback companion; it's also a recorder, letting you take up to 13 hours of high-resolution video on the same 20GB drive that stores over 550 hours of music or personally recorded audio. Built-in editing tools help you turn your raw home video into highlight reels everyone can enjoy on the way home from your latest winter outing.

HP iPAQ hw6515 Mobile Manager\$649 • www.hpshopping.com

Not only will you be able to check email from the road, you'll know exactly how to get to your daughter's basketball game on a moment's notice. HP's newest smartphone offers voice and data service through

Cingular's high-speed network and includes a built-in GPS receiver. Whether you're hitting the slopes or trying to find the tournament location, you'll never be lost or out of touch again.



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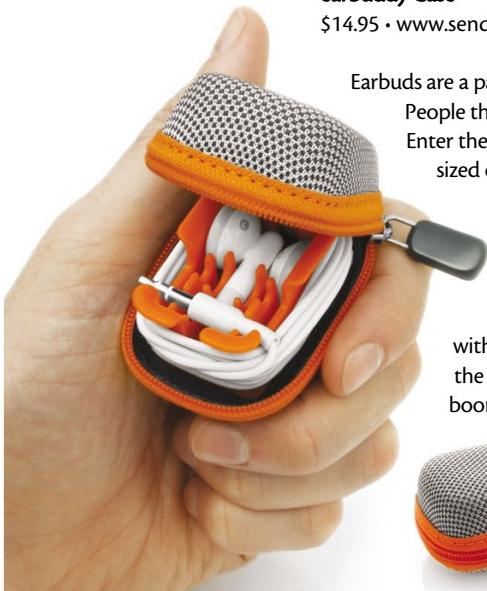
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Love is blind.

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earBuddy Case

\$14.95 • www.sendstation.com



Earbuds are a pain when they're not in your ears. People think Christmas lights get tangled? Enter the earBuddy: a hardshell, keyring-sized case designed to keep your earbuds safe, sound, and knot-free. According to manufacturer SendStation Systems, the earBuddy is galvanized with "sturdy ballistic nylon" and can withstand the "everyday dangers of the urban jungle and those in the boondocks, too."



Love2 Heart-Shaped Mouse

Approximately \$35 U.S.
www.pat-says-now.com



Is there a special workaholic in your life this Valentine's Day? Nothing says "be mine" like a heart-shaped mouse from Pat Says Now (available from www.aria-shop.co.uk). The standard rollerball-style mouse is USB/PS2-compatible, features a three-button design with scroll functionality, and is available for both PC and Mac.

Belkin Kickstand 5GB iPod Case

\$29.99 • www.belkin.com

At press time, trusty Belkin was first on board to outfit Apple's 5G video iPod. The Kickstand is a fine-grained leather case with a namesake display feature that lets you prop your newest 'Pod at a watchable angle. The Kickstand features a detachable carabiner clip and is available in black or white.



Voice Stress Analyzer

\$39.99 • www.smarthouse.com

Suppose you're out on a date this Valentine's Day. The guy seems almost too good to be true. Is he the man of your dreams or a smooth-talking player? Find out with the Truth Detector, an audio stress monitor that glows telltale red when it measures increased stress levels—the ones generally associated with lying—in Mr. Wonderful's voice. Romantic spontaneity and 9-volt battery not included.





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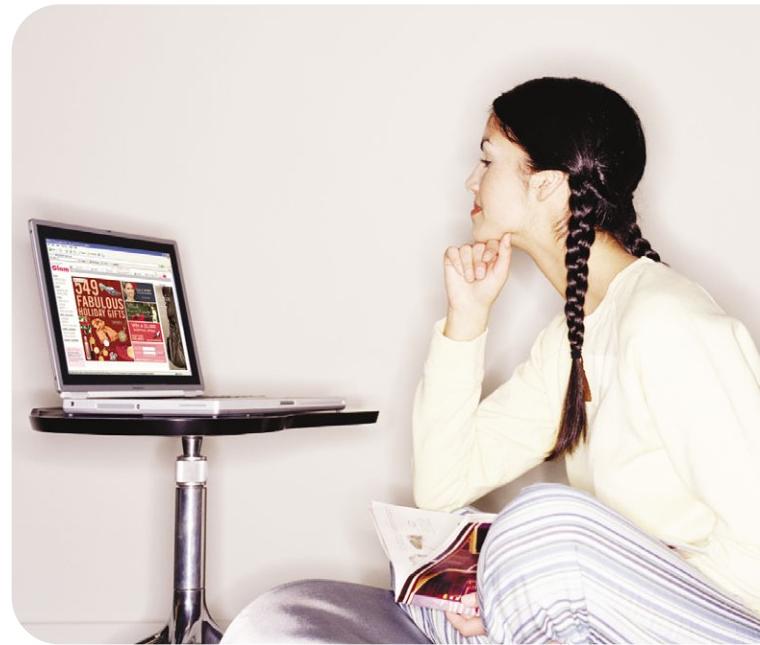
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Shopping Site Of The Month

Glam

www.glam.com



If you love fashion magazines but don't know where to find the looks you crave, or if you love shopping but aren't sure what look you're going for, Glam (www.glam.com) can help you bring it all together in one online experience.

Visiting the Glam Web site (in its **beta** release, which means it's still being tested, so kinks can be worked out before the official launch) is like opening up your favorite fashion magazine and being able to buy anything you see without ever leaving your living room. Sound like a dream come true? Then read on.



Find Your Way

On the Glam home page, you'll find categories, including Tests, Stars, Style, Categories, and Shops, across the top of the page, and the same categories will be listed along the left side. You can choose from either area, but the categories along the top will remain constant no matter where you end up on the site, while those

on the left will change to give you more detailed choices.

Like any good fashion magazine, it's easy to lose yourself in the (Web) pages of Glam. So to get you started, here's a glimpse inside each category.

Tests. What's a fashion magazine without a test or two to help you pinpoint your personality type or determine your style? In this section, choose your quiz and answer by selecting the appropriate radio button. When you're done, Glam will give you the results. Along with your analysis, you'll get Style Matches, which are suggestions tailored to your answers.

Stars. Find out the dish behind celebrity style. Click Top 10 Celebrities: Celebrity Style Pages to see fashions that the hottest stars are wearing. Click an item to learn more, and if the mood strikes you, you can either add it to your shopping bag by clicking Save To Bag or buy it on the spot by clicking Buy At Seller.

Style. Although it may be self-explanatory, there's plenty in this vast category. For starters, click Lifestyle Ideas for ways

to transform your entire being with health information. Oh, and there's plenty of products in each category to help you achieve your new lifestyle, too

Categories. If you know what you want, this is the best way to find it. Choose from the illustrated categories or click a link on the left to begin browsing. Categories include Accessories, Jewelry, Sleepwear, and more. Each category has four subcategories to help you narrow your search. And, as always, anything you see, you can buy.

Shops. To see what retailers, e-tailers, and boutiques are offering, check this link. For an A to Z list of all of the stores affiliated with Glam, click the All link on the left. Select the name of the retailer that catches your eye to peek at its latest fashions in the Window Shopping area.

We've barely scratched the surface, and we're exhausted. Although anyone can browse Glam, you'll want to register for full access. To become a member, click Register at the top of any page and provide the required information. (You'll need to provide info such as your name, email address, and birthdate.) Click Start and you can experience the incredible blend of fashion and technology. ☎

BY JOY MARTIN

More Audio. More Video.



Hear Sound All Around



In More Rooms.

Today's homes have more audio and video choices than ever before. CD, XM® Satellite Radio, MP3, Hi-Def TV, DVD, DSS, VCR, Security Cameras, and more. For many homeowners, this can be overwhelming. With the new ELAN System12, all of these things come together in one seamless, easy-to-use system.

One touch on an ELAN VIA!® Panel or Keypad puts everything at your fingertips. Enjoy the same or different audio in every room – at the same time. Get video from your VCR and DVD players onto every TV in the home.

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Each month, Vince Cogley and Trista Kunce, both staff members at Sandhills Publishing, share their thoughts about a device or two of their choice. They may not reach common ground on living room décor, but they both agree that CE helps them live well, just sometimes in different ways.

His . . .

My relationship with Valentine's Day has always been a chilly one. Maybe it's because I prefer a robust, red-suited, white-bearded present distributor or a giant, egg-hiding rabbit as my holiday mascot. Perhaps I think Russell Stover sounds like a better name for a mailman than a confections company. But that's about to change; I'm in love ... with a TV.

I've recently spent a significant amount of quality time with Sony's KDF-E50A10, a 50-inch RPTV (rear-projection TV). I'll admit this beauty doesn't have the sexiest sounding name, but take one look at it, and you'll see why I decided to drop my sandy-blonde counterpart down a rung on my Valentine's Day depth chart.

At a few ounces south of 73 pounds, the KDF-E50A10 is lighter than some flat-panel TVs. Because it doesn't have a cabinet, the KDF-E50A10 is a nice compromise between space-saving-but-costly flat-panel TVs and cheap-but-enormous CRT RPTVs.

Watching a DVD or HDTV programming on the KDF-E50A10 wooed me away from analog TV. Sporting events, such as Monday Night Football, presented in 720p spring to life with astonishing detail. The KDF-E50A10 captured individual blades of grass, and beads of sweat stood out with clarity you won't find on a standard television signal.

I'll even concede shows such as "Desperate Housewives" and "Grey's Anatomy" are infinitely more palatable in high-definition. Granted, I found myself admiring the picture quality more than the dialogue, but keeping me on the couch for a two-hour block of Trista's programming is no small feat.

LCD TVs (both flat-panel and RPTV) are commonly criticised for poor black levels, but the KDF-E50A10 showed how far LCDs have come toward displaying true black. Plasmas and CRTs are superior, but the KDF-E50A10 was still satisfying. A word of caution: *Don't buy the KDF-E50A10 thinking it will improve the quality of an analog signal.* It won't, and in some instances, it may look worse because the TV magnifies an analog signal's imperfections.

Also, I noticed the KDF-E50A10 struggled to keep up with sports action presented in 1080i; the interlaced signal often displayed jaggies when the image wasn't still or moving slowly. 720p is clearly better for sports on the KDF-E50A10, but because each network can choose between 720p and 1080i, the decision is unfortunately out of your hands.

A/V junkies should be pleased that the KDF-E50A10 offers a gaggle of inputs. With nine A/V inputs (PC, HDMI, three component, three composite, and S-Video), my DVD player, DVR, and video game consoles don't need to compete for access.

This LCD RPTV is reasonably priced, not too bulky, and handles virtually all HD programming with grace, which leaves me with one question: KDF-E50A10, will you be my Valentine? **CE**

BY VINCE COGLEY



& Hers CE

Now that the holidays are over, it's time for me to *really* test my holiday gifts. Although it's too late to exchange any gifts my venturesome experiments may ruin, I wasn't worried about testing Vince's latest electronic love, the Sony KDF-E50A10 50-inch Grand WEGA Rear Projection HD (high-definition) TV, because any electronic device that knocks *me* down a rung on *anyone's* Valentine's Day list needs to prove itself truly lovable through a series of demanding tests.

I tested the KDF-E50A10 for hours and hours watching several movies and, of course, all of the TV shows I watch routinely on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights. Fortunately, the TV was able to keep up with my rigorous TV-watching tests and disproved some of my preconceived notions about LCD projection TVs.

First off, the black levels on the KDF-E50A10 weren't as bad as some LCD TVs I've watched in the past. They're still a bit muted but dark enough to notice the difference between the various shades of gloom in a dim movie such as "Crash." On the downside, however, to get these blacks their blackest, and even get your colors at a picture-like quality, you have to adjust the color decoding. A slight annoyance if you're used to just turning on the TV and having color settings ready for viewing.

After tweaking the picture and colors on the TV, I was able to finally sit down to watch an episode of "Desperate Housewives" I missed. The picture was vivid and bright. Recorded in high-def, I felt as if I were watching Bree and George outside of their hotel window. I could see every blue, bulging vein in Bree's forehead as she sat glaring at a languishing George. The clarity of the KDF-E50A10's screen was what I expected from a LCD TV, but if you sit too close, the screen looks pixilated.

I arranged the KDF-E50A10 far enough away from my furniture to avoid watching shows as if I were watching them through a screen door. Besides, rearranging this TV wasn't as time-consuming and back-straining as I originally thought. The KDF-E50A10 weighs about 73 pounds (light compared to the 150-plus pound 51-inch Sony widescreen RPTV in my basement), which makes it easier to move from place to place every time I want to redecorate my living room. Also, when compared to my older 3-foot tall TV, the KDF-E50A10's overall size is surprisingly small (32.6 x 46.6 x 16.1 inches [HxWxD]). Because the speakers are located at the bottom of the TV and not along its sides, shaving inches off of the TV's width, I could cram the KDF-E50A10 in corners I would never even think of putting my bulky 51-inch.

After rearranging the TV, adjusting the KDF-E50A10's picture, and watching several movies and some Sunday-night dramas, I felt Sony's widescreen LCD TV passed my post-holiday tests.

Unlike my twitterpated friend Vince, I'm not in love with the KDF-E50A10, but we're not just friends, either. **ce**

BY TRISTA KUNCE

Sony KDF-E50A10
\$2,499.99
www.sonystyle.com





WD-62827 • \$5,800 • www.mitsubishi-tv.com

The TV Guide, Part I

What You Need To Know Before Your Next Upgrade

Imagine, just for a second, being marooned with the rest of "Survivor: Guatemala's" cast. Dirt, grime, and sweat cover every noticeable square inch of your body as you battle for immunity and against Jeff Probst's often campy delivery. The sticky, humid air grips you almost as surely as the satisfaction of winning the contest.

Of course, nothing will quite compare to the realism of actually experiencing this firsthand. But with the abundance of worthy TVs on the market today, you can experience the kind of visual realism that will force your other four senses to convince you that you're not in the midst of Tribal Council deliberation.

There's a veritable alphabet soup of TV types these days, and you'll probably

find one particular type and size TV is better suited to your needs than others. Before heading to your favorite big-box electronics retailers, you should familiarize yourself with the strengths and weaknesses of each type of TV.

The Right Fit For You

Illustrating the strengths and weaknesses of each technology is instructive,



but don't let this guide replace the world's foremost expert on TVs: your very own eyes. Don't be afraid to ask sales representatives for a little alone time with any TVs you're considering and find a TV that looks great and agrees with your wallet. 

BY VINCE COGLEY

FLAT-PANEL

These beauties inspire envy like few other CE devices and for good reason. You won't catch anyone with an iota of intelligence mounting a bulky CRT to the wall.

Plasma

The Good: Although plasma TVs' biggest advantage is price (they're cheaper than flat-panel LCD TVs), you should notice slightly better contrast and **color saturation** (the intensity of an image's colors) on a plasma TV. Plasma TVs used to boast the wider viewing angles than LCDs, but today's flat-panel LCDs also have impressive viewing angles.

The Bad: Until recently, screen burn-in dogged plasma TVs. If a static image remains unchanged for a prolonged time, it may permanently burn into the screen. Manufacturers have introduced pixel orbiters and similar features to circumvent this, but burn-in is something you should be vigilant about.

Affordability: Although Samsung has an 80-inch colossus currently available in Korea, you probably won't have one on your wall unless there's a "Diddy" somewhere in your name. Realistically, plasma TVs run the gamut of \$1,500 to \$15,000.

What To Look For: A pixel orbiter or other antiburn technology reduces the effects of screen burn-in, so keep your eyes peeled for plasma TVs with this feature. Smaller plasmas (37- and 42-inch models, commonly) are often EDTVs (enhanced definition TV) instead of HDTVs, so be sure you know the difference if a plasma you're eyeing has a price tag that's too good to be true.

Our Recommendation: HP PL5000N (\$4,299.99; www.hp.com)

LCD

The Good: LCDs have a wider selection of screen sizes than plasma TVs. Plasma TVs are strictly for the big-screen market segment (plasmas start at 37 inches), but you can find an LCD for almost any situation. Because LCDs have a higher resolution than plasmas of the same size, a 27-inch flat-panel LCD can be HDTV-compatible. Screen burn-in is not an issue with LCDs.

The Bad: They're expensive. Flat-panel LCDs cost more than comparable plasmas and are the most expensive of any TV. LCDs often present black as dark gray; this is particularly noticeable in a dark room. Motion blurring can be a problem on some LCDs.

Affordability: There aren't too many TVs that cost more than a new car, but flat-panel LCDs do it in style. Placate your kids with cartoons after you drain their college-savings accounts for a 65-inch behemoth. Smaller models, however, can cost less than \$1,000.

What To Look For: A salesperson may not acquiesce, but ask if you can view the model you're eyeing in low-light situations. Bright fluorescent lighting often hides differences between an LCD's and a plasma's black levels.

Our Recommendation: Sharp AQUOS LC-45GD7U (\$5,499.99; www.sharpusa.com)

MICRODISPLAYS

These aren't your dad's rear-projection TVs. In case you haven't noticed, microdisplays are a tantalizing compromise between über-slim flat-panel TVs and enormous CRTs, both in terms of price and size. They're deceptively lightweight and can deliver picture quality on par with flat-panel TVs at a fraction of the cost.

DLP (Digital Light Processing)

The Good: Superior black levels and no screen-door effect are the battle cries of DLP champions. DLP microdisplays (rear projection TVs) have an advantage over LCDs with black levels. These TVs will perform better in a dark room, making your home theater feel more like a movie theater. DLP TVs currently have the upper hand in the number of available 1080p-capable sets.

The Bad: DLP's rainbow effect will either be a serious flaw or "the-sky-is-falling" nonsense because it affects everyone differently. Commonly noticed when your eyes scan across an image, some people regularly notice the rainbow effect and others will never experience it. DLPs can also struggle with video noise or artifacts in dark portions of an image.

Affordability: They're about on par with LCD RPTVs. Prices start just less than \$2,000 for a 42- to 46-inch TV and ramp up to about \$7,000 for the big kids on the block, which top out at just over 70 inches.

What To Look For: Before you check anything else, see if you can detect the rainbow effect. To prevent false positives, video of the rainbow effect is readily available on the Internet. If you're buying a TV for the entire family, make sure everyone tests it before you make a purchase.

Our Recommendation: Mitsubishi WD-62827 (\$5,800; www.mitsubishi-tv.com)

LCoS (Liquid Crystal on Silicon)

The Good: Unlike DLP, which is a proprietary technology from Texas Instruments, there are two leading variations of LCoS—JVC's HD-ILA (Direct-drive Image Light Amplifier) and Sony's SXRD (Silicon Crystal Reflective Display). Both technologies offer extremely good brightness and very good black levels. Many LCoS sets are 1080p-capable.

The Bad: LCoS microdisplays aren't as widespread as DLP or LCD microdisplays because of an on-again, off-again relationship with manufacturers, so the selection is far smaller than LCDs or DLPs. Sony and JVC have the most LCoS microdisplays; Philips and Hitachi are also players in the market. LCoS RPTVs tend to be the most expensive microdisplays.

Affordability: If you want an LCoS RPTV, be prepared to pay a little extra for it. Sony's LCoS displays are a step up in quality from its LCD microdisplays, so the price per inch is noticeably higher. For example, the 60-inch Sony KDS-R60XBR1, an LCoS microdisplay, retails for \$4,999.99, \$1,500 more than the 60-inch KDF-E60A20, an LCD.

What To Look For: Even though LCoS differs from LCD, you can take a similar approach when you evaluate an LCoS microdisplay. Compare black levels of the same image with a similar DLP or CRT. (CRTs traditionally have the best black levels, so they make ideal reference sets.)

Our Recommendation: Sony KDF-R60XBR1 (\$4,999.99; www.sony.com)

LCD

The Good: The most obvious difference between LCD and DLP microdisplays is that LCD RPTVs don't fall victim to the rainbow effect. Because LCD and DLP RPTVs have nearly identical native resolutions, you probably won't notice so much difference in a high-definition picture's detail as you would with a plasma and LCD comparison. They perform very well in well-lit rooms, and their contrast is improving with each generation.

The Bad: LCD microdisplays suffer from the same weaknesses as their flat-panel cousins, plus you may also notice a phenomenon called the screen-door effect. The screen-door effect usually only occurs for fleeting moments, but it can be a distraction. Motion blur used to be an issue, but it's far less noticeable on newer displays.

Affordability: If you love an LCD's picture quality but have no desire to wall-mount a flat-panel display, an LCD RPTV will save you thousands of dollars. These microdisplays start with a retail price of about \$2,000. The biggest LCDs are typically 60 inches for about \$3,500.

What To Look For: Sports fans will definitely want to see their favorite sport on an LCD before committing to a purchase. Bring in a DVD, or if a store is properly equipped, time your visit to coincide with a live, HD broadcast of your sport. That way, you'll know if next year's World Series will be crystal clear or a blurry mess.

Our Recommendation: Panasonic PT-61LCX65 (\$2,999.95; www.panasonic.com)

CRT (tube and projection)

These *are* your grandfather's TVs. The oldest technology in this guide, CRTs deserve a spot in the A/V Hall of Fame but are quickly becoming a "when I was your age" technology.

The Good: A mainstay of the A/V world for decades, CRTs combine impressive performance with prices other technologies can't match. They traditionally have great black levels and contrast. CRTs won't suffer from the screen-door or rainbow effect, and they're the most affordable road to HDTV.

The Bad: Take one look at a CRTs size, and you'll know why they're so cheap. Be prepared to clear ample amounts of floor space for the biggest of these displays. Screen burn-in is a problem, but CRTs are not as sensitive as plasmas. They can require costly professional calibration (RPTV CRTs, usually) to achieve the sharpest possible picture.

Affordability: CRTs are still the monarch of the thrifty kingdom. The biggest CRT RPTVs rarely cost over \$2,500, and a small CRT can provide your bedroom with an HDTV for under \$500.

What To Look For: Check CRTs for viewing angle and image sharpness. Although black levels and color contrast should be exceptional on all CRTs, a TV that performs in all of these categories makes it a standout. Finding a CRT with an HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) input is icing on the cake.

Our Recommendation: Tube—Panasonic CT-26WX15 (\$599.95); RPTV—Mitsubishi WS-65517 (\$2,499.98)

Futureproof Your Set With 1080p

The buzzword on the tips of TV enthusiasts' tongues is 1080p; it's currently the Holy Grail of high-definition. But before you plunk down a premium to be the first on your block to own a 1080p TV, know you're planning for the future instead of preparing to enjoy the present.

Although Congress has set a Dec. 31, 2006 deadline for DTV (Digital Television), it can extend the deadline until 85% of homes are equipped to handle DTV. And DTV includes 720p and 1080i; 1080p broadcasts aren't mandatory, though. It will likely be several years before 1080p is commonplace. (See the FCC factsheet: www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/digitaltv.html for more information.)



The Faces Of HDTV

Not all HD broadcasts are equal. Because there are several HDTV formats, one network's HD content can be different from that of its competitor. Consider that 1080i (1,920 x 1,080 resolution) theoretically delivers 2.25 million more pixels than 720p (1,280 x 720 resolution), but both are considered HDTV.

The following list shows the current specifications for the four major networks and a number of cable networks:



720p



1080i



1080i



1080i



720p



1080i



720p



1080i



Onkyo LS-V955 • \$799 • www.onkyousa.com

Bring The Theater Home

Out Of The Box & Into Your Living Room

We know you love movies. Chances are, your family loves them, too, but you may be wondering how to go about finding the perfect HTB (home theater in a box) to simulate the big-screen movie-going experience, all within the comfort of your family room. The best HTBs don't just pummel your eardrums when you watch TV or play your DVD movies; they envelop you with such stunningly realistic sounds that you can't help but be drawn into the on-screen action and emotion. A high-quality HTB transforms whatever you're viewing into a deeply visceral experience, whether you're watching

"Titanic's" breathtaking love scene or its explosive finale.

What To Look For

HTBs are the way to go whether you're looking to upgrade your existing home-theater setup or you're in the market for your first system. HTBs are a great buy because they're sold as a complete unit. The speakers, receiver, and subwoofer are all designed to work together to deliver the best possible sound at a given price point, so there's an HTB out there for just about any budget. You can expect to pay as little as \$200 and as much as \$3,000 for an

HTB. Generally, the price of an HTB increases as speaker quality increases, so plan your budget carefully to get the most bang for your buck.

Like most consumer electronic devices, HTBs are sold based on seemingly inexplicable and largely impractical specifications. If you've done any shopping for an HTB, then you've probably encountered a slew of unintelligible product descriptions that tout this model's specifications over that model's specifications. Playing the numbers game may befit some folks, but not everybody has the patience to pour over spec charts, which generally tell you very little about how the system will

perform in your living room, dorm room, or apartment. You can compare specs all day long, but finding your ideal HTB involves looking beyond the numbers.

Start with what you have. When narrowing down your choices, take into account any A/V equipment you currently use and whether you want to continue using it or if you want to upgrade. Your ideal HTB should be capable of handling, either directly or via inputs, all of your current entertainment media, such as CDs, cassette tapes, vinyl, laser discs, VHS tapes, and DVDs. Make a list of the connections your old components require, so you can shop for an HTB with a receiver that has the appropriate number of inputs.

Wireless wonder. Often the act of setting up a surround-sound home-theater system has the unintended consequence of surrounding you with wires. Your living room is a high-traffic area, and it's likely one of the last places you're going to want meandering wires. If you're not crazy about the minor demolition involved in stringing wires behind walls or if you bristle at the thought of having to cover your speaker wires with a tangerine shag rug, then consider nixing the wires altogether by opting for an HTB with wireless speakers. The Sony Dream System DAV-FX100W (\$899.95; www.sony.com) features wireless speakers that can make your life a lot simpler—and your home a lot less cluttered.

Standing room only. When you buy an HTB, you probably don't intend to add several pieces of new furniture to your family room just to accommodate your new speakers. For this reason you'll want to consider the design of your HTB's speakers. Some systems come with built-in speaker stands, and although you can save money on mounting hardware with these systems, you may have animals or small children who tend to topple anything and everything not bolted to the floor.

Our Favorite HTBs

Here's our roundup of the best that's out there.

Onkyo LS-V955 • \$799 • www.onkyousa.com



The LS-V955 is one of the more attractive HTBs we've encountered. This system also features high-quality speakers that perform similarly to those found in much more expensive systems. The 150-watt subwoofer is powerful enough to be felt as much as heard and can really bring your movies to life.

Yamaha YHT-760 • \$649.99 • www.yamaha.com



We liked the YHT-760's modular design and the receiver's ability to handle multiple discs and a plethora of formats, such as Super Audio CD, DVD, VCD, SVCD (Super Video CD), CD, MP3, JPEG, DivX, and WMA. This unit also features the unique Quad-field Cinema DSP (Digital Signal Processing) technology, which can take your movies and audio to new levels of realism and clarity.

Sony DAV-FX100W • \$999.95 • www.sonystyle.com



The DAV-FX100W features a slick five-disc slot-loading DVD player and free-standing front and rear speakers that can be raised or lowered according to your preference. We also appreciated the unit's wireless technology, which eliminates the hassle of having to hide speaker wires. This unit is also powerful enough to fill even large rooms with full and satisfying sound.

Pioneer HTP-4600 • \$650 • www.pioneerelectronics.com



The HTP-4600 leaves the DVD player out of the equation. As a result, you can couple your existing DVD player with this powerful audio system for the ultimate home theater (and save a few dollars while you're at it). This HTB comes with two free-standing wireless rear speakers. The system also features Front Stage Surround, which bounces sound off the room's ceiling and walls to deliver an even more realistic listening and viewing experience.

Denon S-301 • \$1,599 • www.usa.denon.com



Although a bit pricey, the S-301 from Denon uses Dolby's Virtual Speaker technology to deliver rich immersive audio from just two speakers and a subwoofer. Denon shoots for simplicity and scores with a surprisingly versatile and powerful little unit. Check this system out if you're clutter-phobic.

HTB

Shopping Tips

Do your research. Read online reviews and search for first-hand impressions. Know what you want and how much you can spend before you ever walk into an electronics store.



Crank it. Bring some music of your own to the store, so you can see how each HTB system handles your favorite tunes.



Dig deep. Find out how long the systems have been on the market and whether an updated version will ship in the near future. If you're patient, you may be able to get the old model for a reduced price or get more features with the new model.

Don't be dazzled. Fast-talking salespeople working on commission tend to favor the flashier (and more expensive) HTB systems. Take control of the situation and explain what you need and don't be afraid to walk away empty-handed.



Factor in your décor. Usually with six or more speakers spread throughout the listening area, HTBs are going to be a very visible part of whatever room they inhabit, so choose a system that is visually appealing.



Yamaha YHT-760 • \$649.99 • www.yamaha.com

Very few HTBs come with wall mounts, so if you're planning on mounting speakers out of Timmy's and Rover's reach, make sure you leave room in your budget for the appropriate hardware. The Onkyo LS-V955 (\$799; www.onkyo.com) doesn't include speaker stands or wall mounts, but this system has attractive speakers that you can mount out of reach. The Pioneer HTP-4600 (\$650; www.pioneer.com) features free-standing front speakers, which stand at approximately 3 feet tall.

Less is more. Sleek 2.1-channel HTBs employ virtual surround-sound technologies to trick your ear into hearing sounds from all corners of the room. One such technology is SRS Labs' Tru-Surround, which can envelop you with sound using just two speakers and a subwoofer. The stylish Denon S-301 (\$1,599; www.denon.com) delivers realistic theater surround sound without forcing you to litter your living room with half a dozen speakers.

Hook It Up

Convergence is the latest buzzword in the world of consumer electronics, and many of today's HTBs can do a lot more than just enhance your viewing experience. If you already own or plan on purchasing a digital camera, then consider getting an HTB with a receiver that can read JPEG image files. Some HTBs can also play compressed music, such as MP3s and WMA (Windows Media Audio) files. Some units, such as the Yamaha YHT-760 (\$649.99; www.yamaha.com), are XM Satellite Radio-ready (XM Connect-and-Play antenna required). Some HTBs also let you connect to iPods and other portable media players.

When all is said and done, finding your ideal HTB is simply a matter of carefully balancing your practical concerns with your entertainment needs. 

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN

On such a nice day,
don't you want to go outside and play?



Boston Acoustics Voyager® Speakers and Subwoofers —
designed to bring The Boston Sound™ to the great outdoors.

www.BostonAcoustics.com

Boston
Boston Acoustics

Your Sound Solution™

tips

Play Your Music Politely

1

Consult The Pros

To learn more about how to enjoy your music and respect your own neighbors, visit the Web sites of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency; www.epa.org) and the NPC (Noise Pollution Clearinghouse; www.nonoise.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness and sharing solutions for noise pollution. Here you'll find tips for preventing hearing loss, information on soundproofing products for your environment, and links to other resources, not to mention interesting perspectives on the effects of noise pollution.

2

Car Tunes

What good is a nice day on the open road without the stereo belting out your favorite tunes? Be aware, though, that in some cities, police have the authority to pull over drivers if you're playing your music too loud. Make a habit of turning down your stereo before pulling into driveways or parking lots and at stoplights if your windows are down. This not only protects any nearby eardrums, but also works as a theft deterrent, keeping your rockin' good system a secret from any would-be crooks.

3

Don't Share

You want to share the love. But contrary to what your mom said, you shouldn't share everything—especially not KC and the Sunshine Band at 3 a.m. Keep your music to yourself; be aware of the volume decibel level. Some electronic stores carry sound level meters for as low as \$35. Use the meter readings to establish a comfort zone that lets you enjoy your music and keeps your neighbors blissfully unaware of what you're listening to. Noise ordinances vary by locality, but typically you should limit music to fewer than 60dBs during the day and 45dBs at night. Ask a friend to stand outside and play the role of Mrs. Crabbitz from next door while you test volume settings.

4

Cubicle Courtesy

If one of your co-workers whistles the latest "American Idol" tune while he works, you may have a difficult time concentrating on your work. Most computers can play CDs or online music, but complimentary headphones are rarely included in the company budget. Buy a set of headphones to help cancel ambient noise and stay focused on your work. For more information about which headphones to buy, see "The Perfect Headphones" on page 22 in our January issue.

5

Sound Science 101

Sound waves bounce off hard surfaces and cause noise reverberation. Enhance sound absorption by installing soundproofing panels or hang corkboard, heavy curtains, or a 9- x 12-foot rug near your stereo. Blend sound-absorbing objects with your decor, so you don't have to sacrifice room aesthetics. Small changes can make a big difference: Fill gaps in windows and doors and move freestanding speakers away from walls. As a bonus, these things will heighten the quality of your sound system.



BY ANGIE ZMARZLY

Business at home never sounded so good.

The new iHome iH5™ makes your iPod® earbud free. So you can talk on the phone. Tackle paperwork. And hold meetings in your home office against a backdrop of incredibly rich, natural stereo sound from our iH5 Reson8™ speakers.

The iH5 has a digital AM/FM clock radio that will, should you snooze at work, wake you to the sounds of your iPod! And it does all this while charging your iPod, so it's ready to go when you are.

iHome is home base.



iHome™

www.ihomelink.com



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*except iPod® shuffle



iHome iH5

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HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

iLounge.com | All Things iPod





Technology & A Simple Life

You Can Have Both

In the last decade or so, there's been a major movement toward a simple, unobtrusive, and uncomplicated lifestyle. But for those of us who like technology and all the great products that go along with it, a simple life might not be easy to attain, right? That might have been the case a few years ago, but lately, CE devices are not only simpler themselves, but they also lead to a simpler, less cluttered lifestyle.

The idea is twofold. First, we can have the latest consumer electronics and still keep our lives uncomplicated. For example, Epson's P-400 (\$699.99; www.epson.com) photo storage and viewer device has an 80GB hard drive, so you can store thousands and thousands of digital photo files, which is nice if you don't like having to keep your paper photos organized and your photo albums or boxes stored at home. It has two media card slots, so you don't need your PC to transfer files from the camera, and it also connects directly to select Epson printers for photo printing. If you're a shutterbug (and who isn't?), you'll love how this device is an all-in-one photo file manager that will keep your cherished photos organized and clutter-free, all in a device that is

small enough to easily fit in your purse. For more CE devices that can help you simplify your life, see "Uncomplicate Your Life" on page 30.

The second part of this idea is that there are many, many CE devices out there that are surprisingly simple and easy-to-use for everyone in your family. For example, the Motorola PEBL's (\$MSRP forthcoming; www.motorola.com) clamshell design is a favorite among cell phone users, and the PEBL's easy-to-use keypad layout and rounded shape make it intuitive and comfortable to use and carry. It's nice to know that, even though this is one of the hottest and most current phones from Motorola, the design emphasis is on simplicity and ease of use. For more of our favorite "less is more" products, see "Less Is More" on page 34.

Clutter is out; simplicity is in. Look in any store or style magazine, and you'll see proof that most of us no longer want complicated designs of complex products. Consumer electronics designers know this, and as this month's feature package shows, they have responded in a way that should please the Zen in all of us. 

BY KATIE SOMMER

Uncomplicate Your Life

Make Those CE Devices Work For You

As time goes by, life seems to get more complicated, adding stress to our already fast-moving, high-pressure lives. Some days, just the sound of a cell phone ringing or the thought of turning on your laptop can make you cringe. And sometimes it feels like those devices are dictating the way we live rather than the other way around. It's not supposed to be like that, and it doesn't have to be. The point of all this wonderful technology is to make our lives less complicated, so we can take time to smell the roses or a freshly made latte (decaf, please). With that in mind, we've taken a look at how some of the most common CE devices can put your life on a more even keel. **CE**

BY THEANO NIKITAS

The Snapping Is Easy

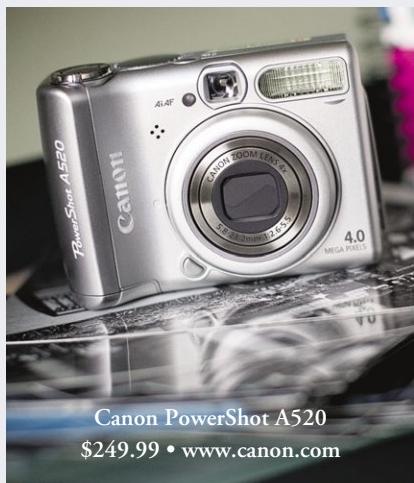
By nature, digital cameras have simplified the process of photography. Gone are the expenses and hassles of buying film, storing film, and taking film to the photo lab to be processed (and picked up later). With digital cameras you have the option of printing only the pictures you want, so that shoebox you have stuffed in the closet won't grow as quickly as it would if you had a continuous influx of snapshot prints. For the ultimate in convenience, you don't even have to leave the house to have your images printed professionally. Just open a free account on a photo-sharing site such as Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com) or Kodak EasyShare Gallery (www.kodakgallery.com) and have the prints mailed right to your front door.

Digital cameras are the electronic equivalent of the alleged memory-enhancer, gingko biloba. Furniture

shopping? Bring the digicam along to photograph the sofas or tables that catch your eye, so you can compare them when you get home. On vacation? Leave the brochures in their little cubbies at the tourist stop and snap historic signs, so you'll have a record of your trip without the paper overload. And with a digital camera, sending photos to family and friends is easy—post them to a free photo-sharing site such as Snapfish (www.snapfish.com), let folks know the pictures are online, and you're saved from sending everyone on your email list a rundown of your latest adventures.

But who's going to take these pictures? Although most families have a designated picture-taker, there are times when other family members want to snap some photos of their own. This can get complicated if one person likes to point-and-shoot,

while another prefers to use advanced features. If that's the case, look for a camera such as the Canon PowerShot A520 (\$249.99; www.canon.com)—it's compact and easy to use, and it has full manual exposure controls, too. ●



Canon PowerShot A520
\$249.99 • www.canon.com

Off The Hook

Love 'em or hate 'em, most of us can't live without them. But changing the way you use your cell phone can transform those love/hate feelings into a well-balanced relationship. If you're not expecting any urgent calls, turn off the phone or, at the very least, screen your calls. (Assigning special ringtones to individuals or groups comes in handy.) Then when you have some time, check voicemail, prioritize the messages, and return your calls. Whenever possible, send a text message response to avoid playing phone tag or getting involved in a longer-than-necessary conversation.

Of course, there are times when staying connected has its benefits. If

your cell phone is Web-enabled, as is the Samsung SCH-a850 (\$99.99; www.verizonwireless.com), sign up for traffic alerts, so you can avoid congested areas when you're on the way to work or rushing to pick up the kids from an after-school event. If you're traveling by air, sign up for flight status alerts (most airlines offer them), so you'll know if there are any delays or changes before you leave for the airport.

Remember, cell-phone manufacturers may be piling on the features, but that doesn't mean you need to use them all. Be judicious about your choices and make the phone work for you. ●



Out-Of-Office Experience

You don't have to be a road warrior to benefit from the mobility of a laptop. When you want to take a little time for yourself, grab your laptop—we like the diminutive 3-pound Fujitsu LifeBook P7120 (starting at \$1,699; www.fujitsupc.com)—and a DVD or CD and head off to the garden or guest room for a little R&R.

Portability also pays when you're helping the kids with their homework—it's easier to gather 'round a laptop at the dining room table than trying to squeeze more than one person in front of a desktop PC. With the wealth of educational software that's currently available, the laptop can be equipped with all the tools needed for any project. You don't even have to keep a dictionary by your side with products such as the electronic Random House Webster's College Dictionary

(\$29.95; www.wordgenius.com); looking up definitions couldn't be easier. Once the software is loaded,



an icon appears on the Desktop. When you're stumped by a word, just drag and drop it onto the dictionary's icon, and the definition will magically appear.

If you're the family's designated record-keeper, why not set up your laptop to be the Grand Central station of your bills, banking, insurance, warranties, and other necessary household record-keeping data? By consolidating paperwork in a one-stop electronic shop, you'll have everything at your fingertips and eliminate playing hide and seek with important papers and statements. Make sure you have sufficient security, a scanner, and a back-up system such as Maxtor's OneTouch II USB 200GB external hard drive (\$259.95; www.maxtor.com), but once you do, you can access all your important documents quickly and easily. Also, see if your bank offers free online banking, so you can pay bills on a comfy sofa during "Desperate Housewives" commercial breaks. Although you may not achieve the perfect paperless world with your laptop, at least you'll be a little closer. ●

No More Lost Tourist Patrols

Although paper planners like the Day Runner are still keeping people's lives on track, electronic devices such as PDAs are gaining popularity at a dizzying rate. With increasingly sophisticated capabilities, PDAs are the guidance systems that not only tell us where and when we're supposed to be, but also suggest places to eat, things to do and see and how to get there. If you've ever looked for some cheap eats or a 5-star dining experience (and we all do, even in our own cities), you know how frustrating it is to go 'round and 'round with your friends trying to make a decision.

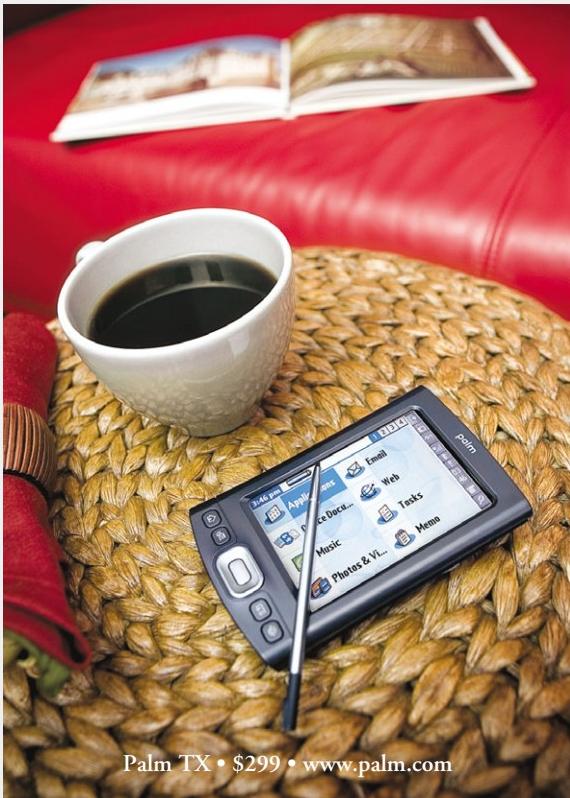
But with your PDA and a subscription to Vindigo (\$24.95 annual subscription or \$3.50 per month; www.vindigo.com), you'll be well-equipped to find the closest restaurants, entertainment, and anything else you need for a stress-free day or

evening out. On your PDA tap in your location and the type of service you're looking for, and Vindigo

provides you with results complete with reviews and maps to get you there. Even if you're the plan-ahead type, Vindigo helps make the planning a much quicker and less stressful experience.

There's a free 30-day trial download; why not give it a try—we're sure you'll spend more time enjoying yourself and less time stressing about where to go and what to do.

If you're in the market for a PDA, consider the new (and affordable) Palm TX (\$299; www.palm.com), on which you may compose and send emails and check the news and weather; if you're on the clock, the Palm TX lets you work with your Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) files, making it one of our top choices for the perfect PDA. ●



Palm TX • \$299 • www.palm.com

Multitask Your Music Player

Sure, digital music players are perfect for long nights at the office, but most can do more than store and play tunes. Portable audio devices, such as the Creative Zen Sleek (20GB, \$269.99; www.creative.com), have a large enough hard drive to transport files without having to compromise your playlist and also syncs with Microsoft Outlook, so you can keep your life—and appointments—on track. But if you're like us, you're constantly making mental to-do lists that

never get transferred to Outlook or written down. If, like the Zen Sleek, your digital music player, has a voice recording feature, all you have to do is press a button, leave yourself an audio reminder, and you're all set. When you're not keeping voice notes, the on-board recorder can also be used to capture music from the Zen Sleek's built-in FM radio (which is great for catching up the latest news, weather and traffic reports, too). ●



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AVS-2663



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resistant powder-coated steel and tempered
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Less Is More

Our Favorite Devices That Know How To Keep It Simple



Women, of course, are no strangers to the concept of multi-tasking. Heck, we probably invented it. But in a world where convergence is the trend, do we really want our CE devices to be jacks-of-all-trades? As we all know, when you take on too much, something is bound to suffer. The same is true for mobile phones, MP3 players, and other products that try to be all things to all users. Because it's getting increasingly difficult to find devices that don't try to be three things at once, we set out to find the best products for users who understand the beauty of simplicity.

Simply The Best

According to CTIA (Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association), there were approximately 170 million U.S. cell phone subscribers in 2004, nearly double the number of users in 2000. As the cell phone market has exploded, it's become harder and harder to find a phone that is just a phone. Even the most basic cell phones now include a gaggle of extra features that are often unrelated to the reason most of us buy our phones—to talk to someone. In fact, many users complain that the addition of too many cool bells and whistles, such as digital cameras, MP3 players, and downloadable games, seems to happen at the expense of ease-of-use and reception.

"I like that my phone can take pictures, and the ring tones are fun, but that's not why I bought it," says Joan Reed, a small-business owner in western Massachusetts who relies on her phone for business purposes nearly every day. "I chose my phone because the service provider [Cingular] offers the best reception in my area, and this phone [Motorola V551] has gotten good reviews and allows me to use my Bluetooth headset and listen to voicemail on speaker phone."

For businesswomen such as Reed, the fact that her camera can capture and play back video and connect to the

Internet played no role in her choice of phone. For her, what Motorola brands as "lifestyle features" are much less important than the practical features, which allow her to get her job done.

"As much as I enjoy being able to snap an occasional picture or download a fun ringtone," says Reed, "I'd trade all the extra features for better reception if I could get it."

Although no cell phone has achieved what we would call "simply perfect" status, we can recommend several excellent phones that have not been bogged down by too many frivolous features: The Samsung SGH-e635 (\$149.99; www.samsung.com) is petite, stylish, and has both a decent camera and a respectable battery life; the LG VX6100 (\$394.99; www.lge.com) has filled its bill with features that actually serve a useful purpose—tri-mode coverage, a sliding lens cover, a tip calculator, and excellent voice-activated dialing with speaker phone and Driving Mode, just to name a few; and the Motorola i850 (\$399.99; www.motorola.com), which uses Motorola's iDEN technology to incorporate voice, data, SMS (Short Message Service), and dispatch radio (two-way radio) into one phone, exemplifies the best in high-functioning simplicity. This GPS-enabled phone offers desirable features—a digital camera, ring tones, MOTOTalk (digital walkie-talkie), and speakerphone—without sacrificing quality in any department. The internal display is large and clear, the camera actually takes decent photos, and the sound quality is strong.

Point & Shoot

According to the CEA (Consumer Electronics Association), despite the ubiquitous status of camera phones—257 million were shipped worldwide in 2004—91% of digital camera owners

still consider their digital cameras to be their main device for taking photos—not their cell phones.

Kodak has set the industry standard for ease-of-use in the digital camera realm and has been rewarded for its efforts with the largest share of the female camera-buying market. The EasyShare line offers simple, high-quality cameras

Wi-Fi and a rotating touch screen and stylus; the V550 (\$349.95), which can automatically turn video into stop-action still pictures; and the C360 (\$249.95), a 5MP point-and-shoot camera with useful features that don't require an afternoon with the manual to figure out. We also like the Panasonic Lumix line for its automatic image stabilizer technology, which makes it easier to capture clear photos

Can You Hear Me Now?

Just as location, location, location is the mantra in real estate, with cell phones it's reception, reception, reception.

Although it's easy to be distracted by all the hip features vendors emphasize with their phones—the Motorola ROKR (\$149.99; www.makemedance.com), for instance, comes bundled with iTunes—a smart shopper will focus first and foremost on

finding the best service provider in her area, and only then will she move on to selecting a compatible phone.

Of course, every cell phone carrier will tell you its reception is the best. So how do you get to the truth? The most reliable way is word-of-mouth. Ask your friends and co-workers which service they use and if they're happy with it. There's also an excellent online resource that can help.

Mobiledia's Cell-Reception database (www.cellreception.com) is independent—it's not affiliated with any carrier or the FCC—and lists all cell towers registered with the FCC. You can search by ZIP code to find the towers in your area. Also available are 16,000 user reviews, so you can find out what other folks near you have to say about their service and their phones. ●

that make taking and sharing photos a cinch—even for women who don't own computers.

"Women are very busy," says Nancy Carr, VP of marketing for Kodak. "They want it right here, right now—or never. If a woman can't do something when she's set the time aside, then she'll leave it. We make it easy for her to print or share photos at home or online or at a retailer's kiosk, so she can get the job done."

From the EasyShare line, we recommend the EasyShare-One (\$599.95; www.kodak.com), which comes with built-in

even if you don't have the steadiest of hands. In particular, we recommend the DMC-LZ2 (\$229.95; www.panasonic.com) and the DMC-FZ20K (\$549.95).

Music To My Ears

If you don't need your MP3 player to double as a photo album or to store every song you've ever heard, the Zen Nano Plus (1GB) from Creative (\$139.99; www.creative.com) is a paragon of simplicity. As small and light as a cigarette lighter, this skip-free flash media player is easy to transport in a pocket, purse, or sports bra.

With the Nano Plus, transferring digital audio files couldn't be easier—you don't even need a computer. Using the line-in feature, it's easy to record directly from other sources, such as a turntable—fun for amateur DJs or those of us who want to digitize our record collections. The bundled track detection software even automatically separates each song you record, making playback even simpler.

The Nano Plus also has an FM receiver, comes in 10 colors, and includes a shuffle feature. The built-in microphone makes it an excellent digital mini-recorder, and because the Nano Plus requires no special charger, all you'll need is one little AAA battery.



Shopping Tips

When shopping for any CE device, it's important to keep your wits about you. It's easy to be wooed and wowed by a long list of special features, but before you

shop, make a complete list of your priorities in order of their importance and then write down for yourself exactly how much you are willing to spend. Stick to the list—and

the price limit—even if a salesperson or a product display makes you start to believe you really do need to listen to music on your cell phone. ●

Handheld Organizers

If you don't need a handheld device that acts as a stand-in for a full-fledged

laptop or desktop, there are several top-notch yet simple options available. For its reasonable price point and its speedy 520MHz processor (plus built-in Bluetooth and Wi-Fi), we're especially enamored of the Dell Axim X51 (\$399; www.dell.com). If you don't need the extra speed or the built-in Wi-Fi, this relatively new model in the well-respected Axim line (which runs the Windows Mobile OS) also comes in a less-is-more 416MHz version sans Wi-Fi, which should more than satisfy your desire for functionality without too much fuss. All that, and it'll save you more than \$100.

For handheld devices that are running the Palm OS, we especially like the PalmOne Zire 31 (\$129; www.palm.com/us) and the Palm T/X Handheld (\$299). The Zire 31 is an older model, but it still has a fast processor, more than enough memory for performing basic functions, and just enough features to satisfy a beginner without overwhelming her. The newer Palm T/X provides integrated Wi-Fi and Bluetooth; a large, brightly-lit screen; and long battery life, making it an affordable option perfect for professional or casual use. ☐

BY NAOMI GRAYCHASE



Great theater deserves a great setting.

Sanus reinvents style in your own home with new Java furniture. Exotic hardwood in a luscious espresso finish, with the added contemporary flair of extruded aluminum and fluted glass, creates the newest tide in contemporary décor. As with all Sanus furniture, the Java line is built with unique A/V features such as extra-deep shelving, large wire channels and removable back panels. Features that set Sanus furniture apart from the crowd...like an escape to a secluded tropical isle.

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A Simple Home

Don't Sacrifice Convenience For Simplicity

The worst thing you can do with good advice is over-react to it. Just because a friend has a great gadget, or a shopping network host raves about a new product, doesn't mean you need it. After all, buying and maintaining products you don't need won't simplify your life.

Instead, think specifically about your situation. What aspects of your home or routine can you streamline? For example, would networked kitchen appliances save you time in the evening when you get home from work and need to get dinner on the table for your family? Do you engage in work or a hobby from home that could benefit from a tool that would assist in repetitive tasks? Think of labeling packages and addressing holiday greeting cards, for instance, using the Dymo LabelWriter 400 (\$109.99; www.dymo.com) instead of your hand.

The following ideas may help identify areas that beg for the most help.

On-Demand Services

Any product or service that lets you watch TV programs and movies at your convenience is a simplifier, especially in families with many members vying for control of the remote. The TiVo service (\$12.95 per month, plus a TiVo box; \$299 for a life-time subscription; www.tivo.com) lets you record and store at



least 40 hours of programming. Or you can get DVR service from your digital cable TV provider. The recorder usually is built into the set-top box required for cable service, so frequently you won't have to pay for additional equipment.

Cable companies also can provide you with movie-on-demand service. No

need to make a special trip to the local video store. You can order a flick from the comfort of your couch and add the cost to your monthly cable bill.

Similarly, the major networks have inked deals with satellite TV providers and cable companies, so viewers can enjoy their shows at their convenience.

For instance, prime time programs on CBS are available for on-demand viewing on Comcast in markets with a CBS-owned and -operated station for 99 cents an episode. For the same price, DirecTV will rebroadcast programs airing on NBC, USA, Bravo, and the Sci-Fi Channel for its viewers who have the satellite provider's new DVR. And certain ABC programs, including "Lost" and "Desperate Housewives," are available for \$1.99 a download from Apple iTunes (www.apple.com/itunes).

Clutter Busters

More than anyone else, Mom serves as the family photographer. The downside to capturing all those memories is finding a place to store the photos.

Take advantage of the technology digital cameras offer: Be selective in the photos you print and display and store all the images you want to keep on CDs. Discs will preserve your images for years and take less space than albums or shoeboxes stuffed with photos you rarely look at.

Similarly, you can streamline the music outlets in your home. Online digital music services, such as Apple iTunes (www.apple.com/itunes), Napster (www.napster.com), and Rhapsody (www.rhapsody.com), let you select and pay for only the songs you want. Even if an MP3 player doesn't appeal to you, think how your kids could benefit from one. A small, affordable MP3 player, such as the 512 MB iPod Shuffle (\$99; www.apple.com/ipodshuffle), takes up far less space in their rooms than stereos and piles of CDs.

While you're organizing your kids' rooms, do the same to yours. It's easy to place a radio or CD player in every room of your house but don't duplicate your efforts in a room with a PC. Let the computer's media player be your personal DJ. Try a free trial subscription to Internet-based content available from services such as

It Pays To Conserve

Conservation isn't just about recycling your newspapers and plastic bottles. You can conserve energy and save money when using CE products, too. Products that meet the energy efficiency standards set forth by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency bear the Energy Star label. The Energy Star Web site (www.energystar.gov) educates consumers on a variety

of energy-saving items, from programmable thermostats—a great investment for families gone most of the day—to TVs and printers.

You also can conserve resources inside and outside your home with timers. A water timer for your lawn and garden, such as the Gilmour 9400 Electronic 4-Cycle Timer (\$39.99; www.gilmour.com), and a timer for your outdoor lights can

reduce your utility bills. Inside, an all-purpose timer, such as the Intermatic DT17C (\$19; www.intermatic.com), can control your lights, TV, stereo, and other electronic equipment. Intermatic also has a new line of wireless timers sold under the HomeSettings label. The starter kit (\$99) contains two light modules and a remote control. ●

Real.com's SuperPass (www.real.com) or use the Radio-Locator site (www.radio-locator.com) to find AM and FM stations that broadcast through the Internet. If a PC or notebook purchase is in the near future, consider getting one loaded with Windows XP Media Center (www.microsoft.com) so that the computer can be your home's entertainment hub.

All-In-One Devices

As home-theater systems' popularity continues to grow, so may the need to have a single, simple device to control the system's components. Enter Harmony remote controls from Logitech (\$99.99 and up; www.logitech.com). The top model, the 880 Advanced Universal Remote (\$249.99), is designed for users with high-end DVRs, including TiVo boxes, and HDTVs. It can control virtually every brand of every device that might be part of your theater system, including a Windows XP Media Center Edition PC.

Spend about 20 minutes entering model numbers into an online database, and you can start watching movies in as little time as it takes to press the Watch A Movie and Play buttons on the remote.

All-in-one devices, such as MFPs (multi-function printers), help streamline your home office, as well. Although most laser MFPs remain costly, especially those that print photos, you don't have to pay a bundle for an inkjet MFP. The HP PSC 2355 All-In-One (\$179.99; www.shoppinghp.com) can print in black and white or color, scan, copy, fax, and produce borderless photos up to 8.5 x 24 inches.

Relish The Convenience

Simplifying your home doesn't mean relinquishing conveniences. Prioritize your needs and then embrace technologies that will enrich your life and conserve time and energy. ☐

BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

Taking It Easy

When Simplicity Is A Must

Flashing lights and twirling rotors impress some people. Others value elegance and simplicity as signs of efficient and thoughtful design. Sometimes, though, straightforward designs and ease-of-use aren't just aesthetic preferences; they're essential for users with small or frail hands and limited vision or hearing. Sometimes users need the basic functionality without all of the latest bells and whistles. Large buttons, clear labeling, and easy operation are especially important for many young or elderly users. Here are a few examples of electronic devices we can all enjoy that are also particularly easy to use.

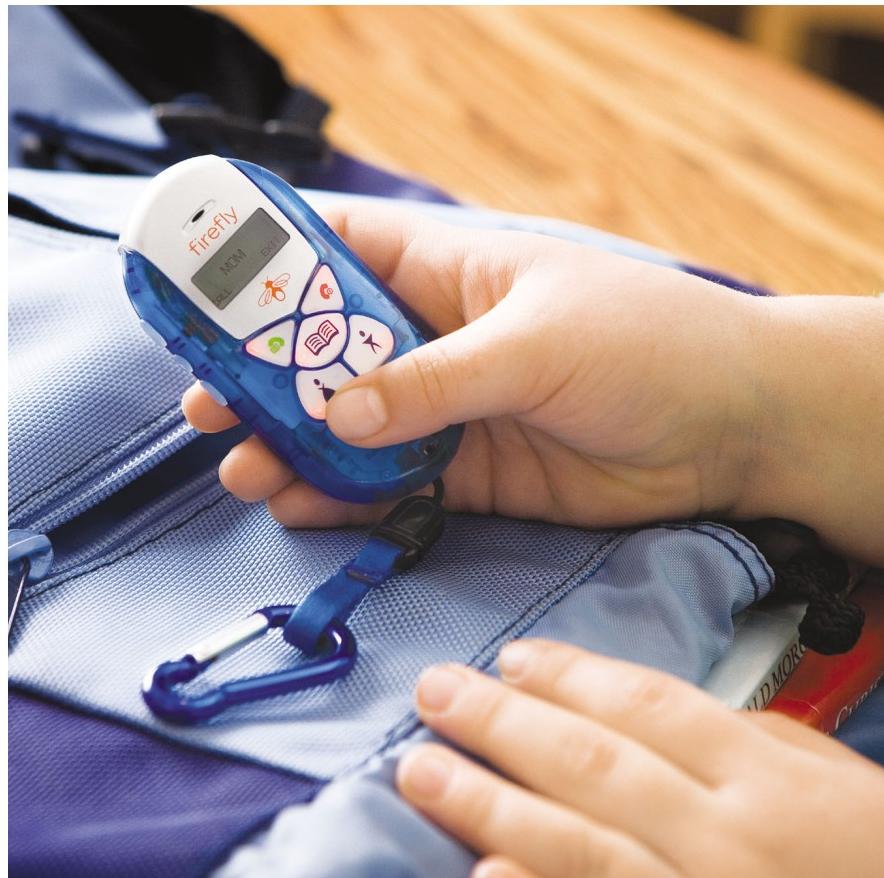
Communications

You can't communicate well unless you can communicate easily.

Kyocera Dorado KX13

\$129.99 • www.kyocera-wireless.com

Classic design and ease-of-use are the focus for this one-piece phone. No flipping, sliding, or twisting required—just enter the phone number and press Send. The large color screen creates an easy-to-read display, and the speaker-phone with voice-activated dialing helps keep things hands-free if necessary. Use the rocker switch at the top of the left side to control volume on the earpiece and speaker.



Firefly Mobile

\$99.99 • www.fireflymobile.com

Though marketed primarily for children, this programmable five-button phone (with pay-as-you-go service) has broader applicability. Anyone who needs limited calling access (up to 20 numbers, with

two single-button programmable entries) and very basic operation (including an emergency call button) will benefit from the Firefly's simplicity.

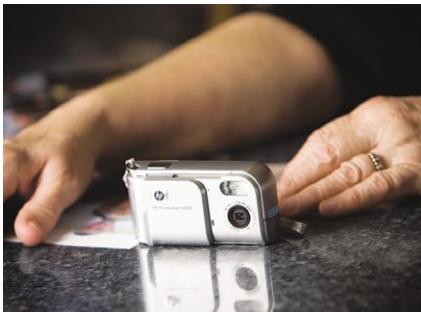
Photography

A picture's worth a thousand words. And we all like to capture those memories

through the magic of photography. Easy-to-use cameras help us share the joy.

HP Photosmart M22

\$129.99 • www.hp.com



This 4MP digital camera is more sophisticated than its basic control layout, well-sized buttons, and simple mechanisms indicate. But it remains easy to use. Just slide open the lens cover to turn it on, press a button on top to capture still pictures or video, and use the LCD to review images. The camera is remarkably light, which is an important feature for those of us without the steadiest of hands. The internal memory (16MB) stores about a dozen shots, giving light users the choice of avoiding memory cards.

CVS One-Time-Use Video Camcorder

\$29.99 • www.cvs.com

Billed as the world's first disposable digital camcorder, CVS' point-and-shoot device lets you capture special moments quickly and easily, without investing lots of time and money in complicated equipment. Take up to 20 minutes of video using just three buttons and get a standard DVD back when you take it in to any CVS store.

Entertainment

We all need a little fun. These toys help everyone enjoy their favorite music.

Apple iPod shuffle

\$129 for 1GB • www.apple.com

It's hard to beat the iPod shuffle for ease of use. With just two controls (play controls and random status) and no moving parts, we can all enjoy our favorite music any time. Computer novices may need help loading music files onto the shuffle, though they won't need separate USB cables, but after that, operation is a snap.

SIRIUS S50

\$329.99 • www.sirius.com

Satellite radio is an easy way for anyone to enjoy her favorite music, talk shows, and

news programming, regardless of where she happens to be. Forget about changing the dial as you travel in and out of coverage, SIRIUS satellite radio (and its XM competitors) offer nationwide coverage with more than 100 commercial-free channels. The S50's large color screen (displays channel, song, and artist) and intuitive controls (channel change, pause, and rewind) make the process easier.

It doesn't take a whole lot to keep things simple. Look for uncomplicated controls, clear uncluttered displays, and basic operations that make things easier for the young, the elderly, and all of us in between. 

BY GREGORY ANDERSON

To The Rescue

Sometimes easy-to-use technology isn't just about convenience. Sometimes it's about making us safer and more secure. These features can save lives.

Single-button operation. Complicated procedures and convoluted controls are a nuisance, and they may be downright dangerous. When you need help in a hurry, look for services such as OnStar (from \$16.95 a month; www.onstar.com) that will send road-side assistance in an emergency. You (or a passenger) can activate OnStar and emergency services by pressing a single button in case of car trouble or an accident.

Motion or noise detection. Smart technology that knows when to act helps ensure safety. The Datexx Sentina (\$30; www.datexx.com), for example, acts as a low-level night-light that brightens as it senses movement. This might prevent someone from falling on the way to the bathroom or getting disoriented in a darkened house.

Reliability. You always want to make sure your purchases will last, but with critical technologies, reliability is paramount. Services, such as *Consumer Reports* (\$26 annual subscription; www.consumerreports.com), compare and rate

products based on safety, reliability, and affordability. Don't rely on guesswork when buying potentially life-saving devices.

Automatic connectivity. Devices that rely on connections to other networks or services shouldn't make you start up the system in the middle of an emergency. Portable GPS (Global Positioning System) devices, such as TomTom's GO 300 (\$699.95; www.tomtom.com), automatically track where you are, where you're going, and the quickest way to find important services such as hospitals or police stations. 

Editor's Top 10

Simple CE Devices

Clean lines. Quiet colors. Uncomplicated designs. The Zen in all of us loves sweet simplicity. This month, *CE Lifestyles* editor Katie Sommer picks her 10 favorite simple CE devices to show that technology can be uncomplicated, too.

Motorola PEBL



(MSRP forthcoming; www.motorola.com): Any cell phone inspired by a river rock is exceptional in my book.

iPod shuffle

(\$99 or \$129; www.apple.com): One button, one purpose: to play your music.



HP Photosmart M22 Digital Camera

(\$129.99; www.hp.com): The very definition of point and shoot.



Firefly Mobile Phone

(\$99.99; www.firefly.com): One button connects your kid to you.



Belkin TuneStage

(MSRP forthcoming; www.belkin.com): All white, no wires: Listen to your iPod at home in clutter-free bliss.



Mobile Edge Milano Laptop Tote

(\$119.99; www.mobileedge.com): Sleek, classic lines with room for everything in your purse.



Casio Exilim EX-Z750

(\$399.99; www.casio.com): A high-end, but not high-maintenance, digital camera.



Creative MuVo TX FM

(\$69.99 to \$139.99; www.creative.com): The direct USB connection means no annoying cords



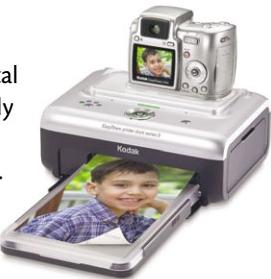
Griffin iSqueeze

(\$9.99; www.griffintechnology.com): Protect your iPod with this brilliantly simple cup-holder insert for your car.



Kodak EasyShare Z740 & Printer Dock

(\$399.95; www.kodak.com): Print your digital photos instantly without the PC middleman.



Tips On Keeping CE Devices Organized

Stay One Step Ahead

When it comes to disappearing, MP3 players, digital cameras, and other small, portable electronic devices are almost as clever as remotes. Turn your back on an

player and digital camera. Choose a logical and convenient storage spot and put the cell phone there after every use. If you take it with you when you leave the house, storing it with your car keys or on top of a combination shelf/coat rack

the information by product type, such as tools, electronics, or appliances.



unattended device for a minute, and it's likely to run for cover. Keep these devices under control by assigning them a specific storage location. The last person to use the device is charged with returning it to that location. To make the task easier (and more likely to be carried out), choose a logical and convenient location, such as a drawer in the entertainment center or a cabinet or closet in the family room.

Keep Things Together

Cell phones fall into the slippery-objects category, too, due to their diminutive size. To keep tabs on your phone, follow the same rules you establish for the MP3

will help eliminate frantic, last-minute searches when you head out the door.

Ask The Right Questions

Most of us don't read manuals except as a last resort, but it's a good idea to store them close by, at least in the early stages of using a new product. When deciding how to file product information, think about where you would look for it, not where you should file it. For example, if you were looking for the warranty for your digital camera, would your first reaction be to look under Canon, PowerShot, or camera? Your answer will tell you whether you should set up file folders by manufacturer or model name or group

Safeguard Your Purchases

In addition to filing warranties and manuals, create a separate list of product information and update it whenever you make major purchases, not just electronic gadgets. The list should include the manufacturer, model name, model number, serial number (if applicable), date of purchase, place of purchase, and cost. Store a copy of the list with a family member or in a safe-deposit box, if you have one, and don't forget to keep the copy up-to-date. If it's practical, include a copy of the receipts, at least for big-ticket items. This information will save you time and stress in the event of theft or a fire.

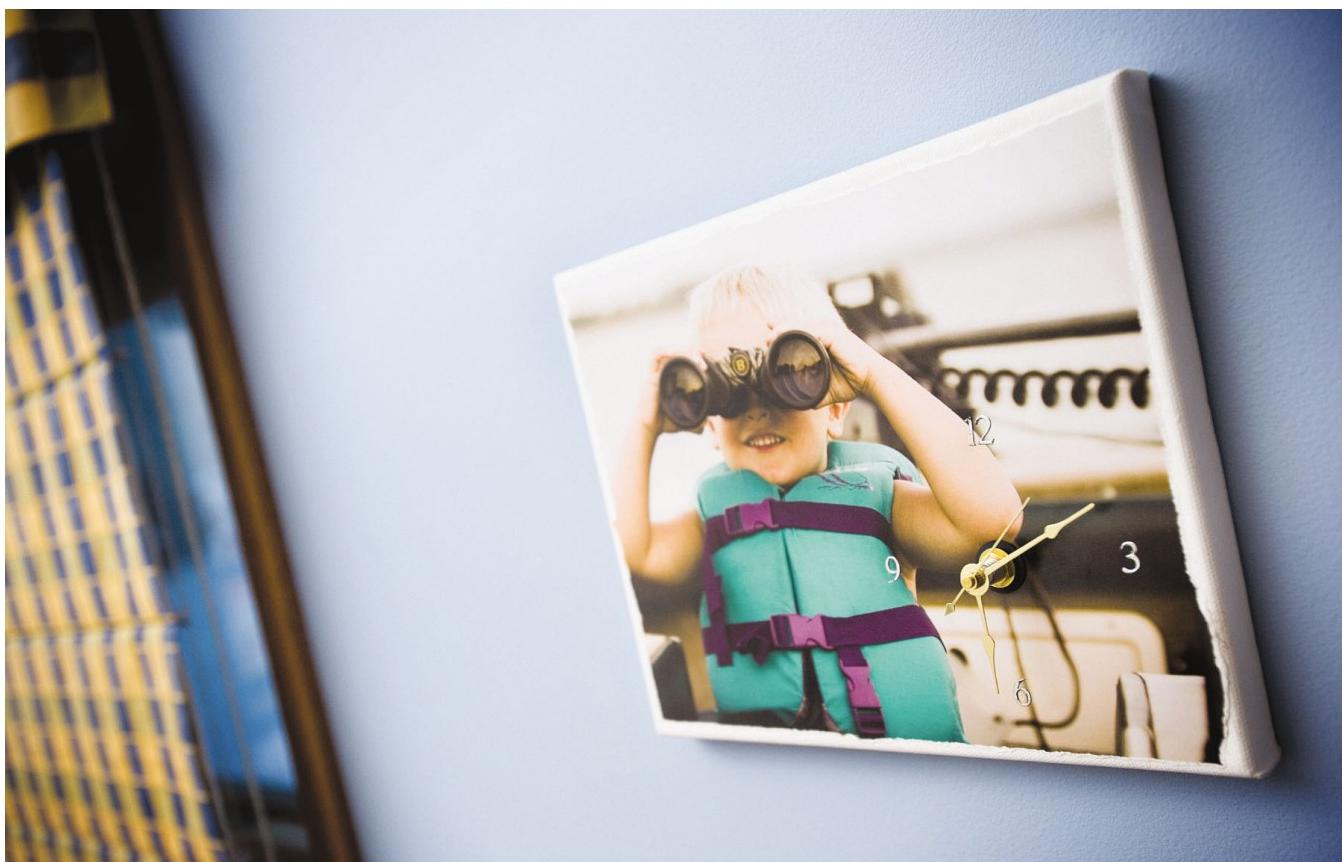
Mind The Warranty Period

Product manuals, boxes, and related paraphernalia can quickly consume more than their fair share of space. It's not always necessary to hold onto everything, but don't get too carried away by the organizing bug. Keep all packaging and the original receipt for the duration of a product's warranty period, in case you need to return it for repair or a refund. Fold a note with the warranty expiration date over the edge of the package or jot the information on your calendar. After that date, you can safely toss the package. ☐

BY TOM NELSON AND MARY O'CONNOR

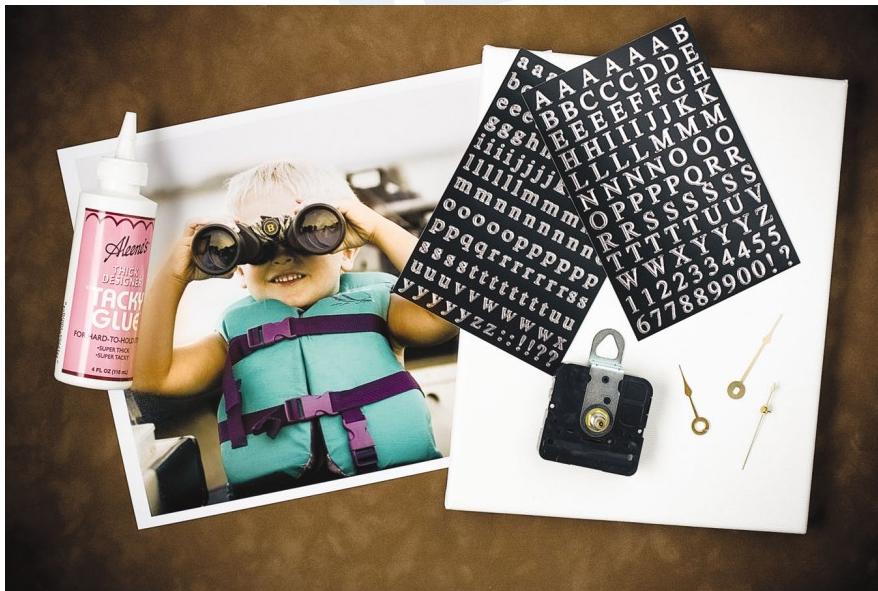
Digital Photo Project

Photo Clock



H

ow often do you look at your photo albums? Once a month, maybe, when you have visitors or go to Grandma's. How about your framed photos? Even though they're in plain sight, you might not take the time to look at them often. However, a clock is something most of us look at several times a day, so what better way to display and enjoy your favorite digital photo than making a beautiful timepiece out of it?



SUPPLIES:

- 8- x 10-inch stretched artist canvas
- Decoupage glue
- Clock kit (available at craft stores)
- 8- x 10-inch print of a favorite digital photo
- Paint or sponge brush
- Drill and drill bits
- Decorative elements for the frame or clock face (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

Before you purchase either the clock kit or the artist canvas, make sure the depth of the kit is thinner than the depth of the canvas. Usually, this information is found on the packaging, but if it's not, measure yourself to see. Aim for a 1/4-inch depth for the clock kit to be safe.

Next, decoupage the photo to the canvas. Use the sponge brush to spread glue on both the canvas and the photo and then adhere them to each other. Let this dry completely.

Next, decide where you want the clock face to be. We loved the off-centered look with our photo, but you can put yours wherever you like. Mark the location with a light pen or pencil mark.

Use the drill and bit to drill through the center of the photo and canvas. Do this slowly and carefully—if you apply too much pressure, or if your drill bit is too dull, you risk tearing or damaging the canvas and photo. One way you can avoid the damage is to use a small drill bit and gradually work your way up to a large one.

Next, use your favorite decorative elements to embellish the clock. We love the simple look of four numbers (12, 3, 6, and 9) for the clock face, but you can add all 12 numbers if they'll fit. (Consider using abstract elements, such as adhesive-backed gemstones or small flowers, instead of the numbers for a contemporary look.) You can use similar elements around the outside of the frame to give

the clock a finished look: Mosaic or mirrored tiles are our favorites.

Attach the clock kit to the canvas and photo. You'll find exact directions on how to do this in your kit's packaging. Insert a battery (if needed) and set the clock to the current time.

Finally, hang it! It's sure to be a conversation-starter when you have friends and family over to visit, and you'll get a lot of use out of it, too.

TIPS:

 Customize your clock for any room in the house. For example, use a black-and-white architectural photo and mirror tiles for a contemporary living room, or you can soften it for a child's bedroom by using a color photo of your daughter and gluing different-colored buttons along the outside edge.

 If you don't like the hands the clock kit came with, paint them with a light coat of spray paint. (Don't use anything too heavy, though, because the extra weight can throw off the timing.)

 Don't feel limited to a rectangular shape; you can use almost anything with a somewhat flat surface to make a clock. Consider decoupling a photo to a pretty plate you found at a flea market by trimming the photo to fit the inside circle. (Make sure you have the proper drill bit, though, before you drill the clock hole.)

 You can edge the photo with just about anything you can imagine. Pebble gravel, buttons, mosaic glass, strips of ribbon, and even sand can add interesting texture to the outside of your clock. ☺

BY KATIE SOMMER

Should I Invest In A Photo Printer?

Portable, PC-Free Printers Are Surprisingly Affordable



HP Photosmart 335 GoGo
\$149.99 • www.shopping.hp.com

This could be one of your toughest CE decisions. You have a digital camera, and now you have to choose the most convenient, affordable way to make prints from that camera. Here are your options:

- Buy a photo printer and keep it stocked with cartridges and paper
- Upload to an online photo service
- Print using a photo kiosk

For now, we want to focus on photo printers, which are relatively affordable.

Unlike a basic printer for your computer, many photo printers have an LCD for previewing the photo and come with photo-editing software. And some models can run on battery power, so you can shoot and print anywhere. Their greatest convenience, however, is that you can use many photo printers with or without a PC, regardless of their power sources.

Print On The Go

A prime example of this type of printer is the Epson PictureMate Deluxe Viewer Edition (\$199.99; www.epson.com). This six-ink model has a 2.4-inch viewer, is

PictBridge-compatible, and works with all the popular brands of memory cards. It's not a speedy model—pictures take more than a minute to print—but its prints are made to last. In its most recent permanence-ratings survey of 4- x 6-inch photo printers, Wilhelm Imaging Research (www.wilhelm-research.com) rates the durability of prints made by this model and the Epson PictureMate Personal Photo Lab (\$129) at the top.

But more important for shutterbugs who want to print on the go, the Picture-Mate runs on batteries (and AC power), weighs just 5.5 pounds, and has a handle. It also has a power cord, which you can remove when you want to take the printer with you.

Another PC-free model is the compact Olympus P-11 (\$149.99; www.olympusamerica.com). It lacks an LCD, but it is PictBridge-compatible, so you can leave your memory card in your camera and use the camera's LCD to preview the print. Or you can preview and edit images through your PC.

The Olympus P-11 is speedy for its price range; you can print 4- x 6-inch and 3.5- x 5-inch prints in about 33 and 30 seconds, respectively. It's a dye-sublimation model, meaning prints are made by the ribbon cartridge "melting" a layer of dye onto the paper and then adding a protective overcoat.

Though it operates solely on AC power, the 5.1-pound Olympus P-11 is still

Photo Services vs. Photo Kiosks vs. Photo Printers

What's the cost of a single 4- x 6-inch print? We compared the prices of online photo services, local photo kiosks, and photo printers. Below is the single costs of a print and the annual cost of your photos if you print 200 pictures a year.

Online

Walgreens.com

19 cents each. Avoid S&H charges by picking them up at your local Walgreens. • \$38 annually

Walmart.com

19 cents each. Avoid S&H charges by picking them up at your local Walmart. • \$38 annually

Snapfish.com

12 cents each, plus S&H. Or 19 cents each if you pick up the prints at your local Walgreens.
\$24 to \$38 annually

Kodakgallery.com

15 cents each, plus S&H
\$30 annually, plus S&H

Photo Kiosks

Kodak Picture Maker at Walgreens, Hy-Vee, and Wal-Mart*

28 to 29 cents each
\$56 to \$58 annually

Kodak Kiosk at Target

20 to 36 cents each
\$40 to \$72 annually

28 cents is the cost for using the Picture Maker kiosk by yourself at Wal-Mart. If you use one of Wal-Mart's three one-hour kiosks, it costs 19 cents each.

Photo Printers

Epson PictureMate Deluxe Viewer Edition

29 cents each • \$58 annually

Olympus P-11

39 cents each • \$78 annually

HP Photosmart 335 GoGo

24 cents each • \$48 annually

portable. It's stylish, and with dimensions of just 6.2 x 7.3 x 7.1 inches (HxWxD), it takes up very little space wherever you put it.

The HP Photosmart 335 GoGo printer (\$149.99; www.shopping.hp.com) offers a decent mix of features. Although the color display is small (only 1.5 inches), this tri-color, PictBridge-enabled printer can work without a PC and can operate on optional rechargeable batteries. Or if you buy an HP Bluetooth Wireless Printer Adapter (\$59.99), you can print remotely from your phone, laptop, or PDA. It can

print borderless 4- x 6-inch images in about a minute, and with an optional grey cartridge, it can produce black-and-white photos with a vintage look.

Like the 335 GoGo, the Canon Pixma iP6600D (\$199.99; www.canonusa.com) is Bluetooth-enabled for wireless printing and PictBridge-enabled for digital cameras and camcorders. It stands out with its generous 3.5-inch LCD and speedier print times: a 4- x 6-inch borderless print shoots out in 46 seconds. With additional accessories, you can produce two-sided prints, as well.

Bigger, Faster . . . & Pricier

The more photos you print, the more important the speed of the printer becomes. Unfortunately the more quickly a printer can produce your prints, the more expensive it typically is.

For instance, the HP Photosmart 8750 Professional Photo Printer can whip out 4- x 6-inch prints in as little as 29 seconds. That's half a minute faster than many printers, but its speed comes at a price—\$499.99. Of course, quicker printing times are not the only benefit a high-end printer gives you. The HP Photosmart 8750 prints in nine-ink color (many printers print in four or six) and can produce borderless picture up to 13 x 19 inches and panoramic images.

Paper & Ink Costs

Perhaps the greatest benefit of digital photography is that you can preview and erase photos, thereby saving yourself the expense of printing blurry, off-centered, or otherwise poorly composed photos.

Printing digital images will cost you, but the price of a photo printer may not be your greatest concern when deciding whether to buy one. You also must consider the ongoing costs of photo paper and ink cartridges or ribbons.

To figure printing costs, begin with the assumption that you'll use paper and ink made by the manufacturer of your printer. There are several good reasons for doing this. First, compatibility issues may prevent you from using third-party supplies, especially ink cartridges. Second, printers may be limited in the size, thickness, or type of papers they can print on. A printer's owner manual or the manufacturer's Web site—the Paper Finder on the Epson site, for instance—will guide you in selecting the right kind of paper to use. Third, using third-party/unauthorized products that damage your printer may void the

How Long Do Ink Cartridges Last?

Some manufacturers make cartridges or ribbons to last about as long as the printing pack in which they're sold. Thus, depending on the manufacturer and the size of prints you want, the inks will last anywhere from 20 to 200 prints—enough to match the number of papers included in the pack.

On the other hand, figuring out the longevity of individually purchased ink cartridges is no easy task. As HP's Brian Helterine points out, it's a complex issue determined by a variety of factors, including how often you print:

Frequently used printers attain a higher level of efficiency in their use of the ink, so in the long run, their yield is greater than seldom-used printers.

Right now there is no industry standard for testing the yield of ink cartridges for color inkjet printers. Comparing the printers of one manufacturer with those of another "is not an apple-to-apple comparison," Helterine says. However, the ISO (International Organization for Standardization; www.iso.org) is developing such a standard, which will make comparisons easier for consumers

in the future. Meanwhile, to understand how HP measures yields for its printers, see www.hp.com/go/pageyield.

We also asked Canon about its CLI cartridges made for the PIXMA iP6600D. A customer service rep told us the company classifies the ink tanks by how many characters per page and how many pages one tank will print. For instance, the oft-used yellow (\$14.25; CLI-8Y) would print about 460 pages, while the less-used photo magenta (\$14.25; CLI-8PM) could print more than 5,000 pages. ●

manufacturer's warranty, so read the fine print.

With some photo printers, such as the Epson PictureMate Deluxe Viewer Edition and the Olympus P-11, there's no need to guess how many prints a printing kit will yield. The purchase price of the PictureMate includes one PictureMate Print Pack (\$29 if purchased separately), which comes with a six-color ink cartridge and enough paper for 100 4- x 6-inch prints.

Similarly, Olympus sells several printer packs for the P-11. The P-P100 Print Pack (\$38.99) yields 100 4 x 6 prints (almost 39 cents per print), and the P-L100 Print Pack (\$34.99) yields 100 3.5 x 5 prints (almost 35 cents per print). You can buy 40-yield packs at reduced prices (\$17.99 to \$19.99), but the price per print goes up.

On the other hand, many models let you replace individual inkjet cartridges, meaning you can spread out the costs for maintaining the printer. For instance, the Epson Stylus Photo



Canon Pixma iP6600D
\$199.99 • www.canonusa.com

R220 requires one black (\$17.09) and five colored cartridges (\$12.34 each). Epson sells many paper types that work with this model on its site. The

borderless Premium Glossy Photo Paper (\$16.20), for example, yields 100 4- x 6-inch prints at about 16 cents each, not counting ink costs. As you might expect, determining printing costs for printers like this is more of a guessing game, at least initially. (For more information about ink costs, see the "How Long Do Ink Cartridges Last?" sidebar.)

Have It Your Way

We said that deciding on a photo printer could be a tough choice, but it doesn't have to be. Buying a low-cost photo printer is probably the best option if you snap pictures throughout the year and want primarily 4- x 6-inch or smaller prints. However, remember that owning a photo printer doesn't necessarily exclude you from taking advantage of online or in-store services, especially if you want a print size or the special effects that your printer can't produce. ☎

BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

USE YOUR BRAIN

left side

- Portable Audio for iPods
- AC & Battery Powered
- XdB™ - enhanced Subwoofer
- High Efficiency Digital Amplification
- Wireless Remote
- Built-in iPod® Cradle
- Neodymium Drivers
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- S-Video Output
- Universal Power Adapter
- Auxiliary Input Jack

right side

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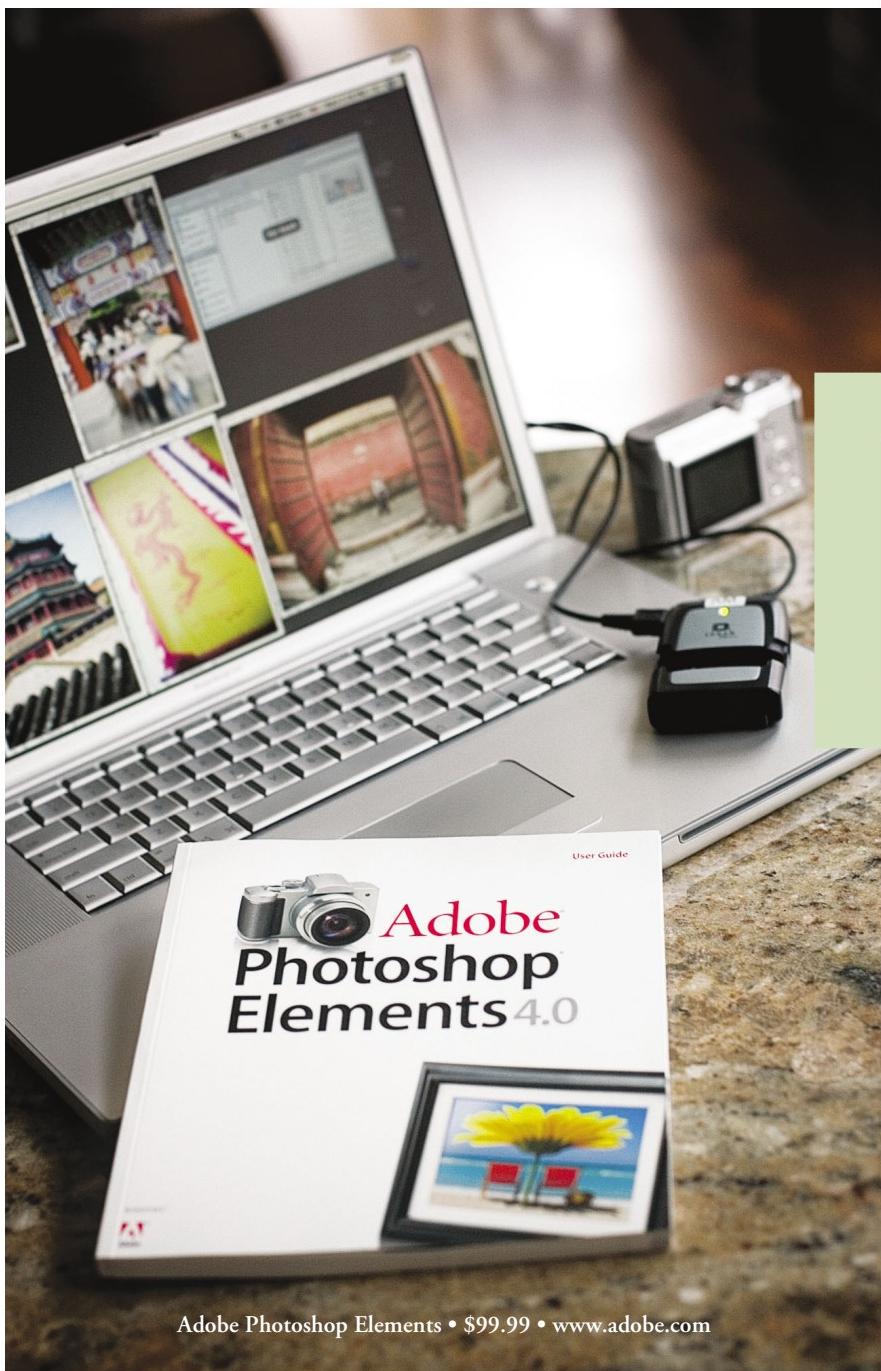

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Photo File Frustration

Bring Chaos To Order In Your Image Folders



Adobe Photoshop Elements • \$99.99 • www.adobe.com

D

igital cameras may let you shoot to your heart's content, but that same advantage can turn a small image collection into a burgeoning nightmare of disorganized folders almost overnight. You can avoid these kinds of problems by setting up a suitable image organization system—before your precious images start losing themselves in the nooks and crannies of your hard drive.

Start Right Now

Of all the tips you can use to make life easier when you're trying to grapple with hundreds of thousands of images, remember this: Don't unnecessarily add to your burden. In other words, delete bad photos before they ever have a chance to clog up your hard drive. The convenience of digital

photography makes it tempting to snap dozens or hundreds of shots without a second thought, but it's important to remember that you'll eventually have to deal with every half-hearted picture you take.

Organize Hardcopy Photos

Recycle those shoeboxes. You need to develop good habits for organizing the glossies you create from digital images, but sneaker packaging definitely isn't the way to go.

Invest instead in fire-safe filing boxes, such as the Sentry Model FCB-1 (\$20.64; www.sentrysafe.com). The tough material will protect your photos from moisture and household pests, and they won't eventually fall apart due to the weight of their contents. You might initially think that a large filing box is too large for your 4 x 6 and 5 x 7 prints, but with the price of printing falling, there's a good chance you'll be adding 8 x 10 and letter-size prints, too, so don't skimp on space.

Depending on the size of your filing box, you can insert filing folders. If standard-size folders won't fit the box you buy, just use scissors and trim folders until they'll slide into place. Label the tabs on these folders with dates and events and try to update these folders at least once per month. That way you can flip through your photo memories and find specific prints with less hassle. You can insert CD envelopes into each month's folder and then store a CD or DVD with your digital versions, too. ●

Most cameras (such as the Casio Exilim EX-Z750 [\$399.99; www.casio.com]) also come with a video cable that lets you connect your camera directly to a television's Video In port. Use this capability to your advantage. Review your shots on TV and delete those that are blurry or poorly composed. It's important that you use a TV as opposed to your camera's tiny color monitor for this process, primarily because the larger screen will make it easier to see photo flaws. As you're reviewing photos for deletion, be merciless. It's tempting to hold onto blurry or even awful shots for some creative projects in the future, but if you routinely take a lot of photos, chances are good that these images will pointlessly eat hard drive space. To avoid photo overload, keep only the photos that really strike you as memorable.

After you delete photos you don't want, transfer images to your hard drive. You should use a flash card reader, such as SanDisk's ImageMate 12-in-1 Reader/Writer (\$34.99; www.sandisk.com) for this job to conserve your camera's battery life, and for simplicity's sake, you can just cut and paste the image folder to your Windows Desktop.

Basic Sorts

You don't need fancy (and expensive) software to create an image organization system. Windows already has the basic tools you need to sort and search through your images.

You probably already know that you can easily rename a single file in Windows. This capability lets you rename your



Casio Exilim EX-Z750 • \$399.99 • www.casio.com

image with something more descriptive, for example, "autumn leaves yellow 2005." You can use dozens of descriptive words in a single file name if you so choose. In doing so, you're basically attaching keywords describing the subject, subject color, and time frame, all of which will come in very handy when you attempt to search for particular images.

Better yet, you can rename multiple files simultaneously using Windows. To select a group of files in a folder, hold down the SHIFT key, click the first file, and then click the last file in your list. Right-click the files, click Rename, and type the file name details. After you press ENTER, you'll see all of the files renamed, each followed by a sequential number. You can also pick and choose individual files from a folder by holding the CTRL key instead of the SHIFT key.

After you rename your new folder of files, you can rename the folder itself and move it into the My Pictures folder. Use a hierachical system to organize your photo folders. Create a folder for each year ("2005" or "2004," for example) and then break down each year into months. Within each month's folder, sort your images into folders named for each event or holiday. Then you can use the Windows Search feature to find certain photos fast by name or by the date you took them.

Organizer Software

If Windows' built-in tools aren't powerful enough to suit your needs, you'll find many programs with sorting capabilities. Adobe Photoshop Elements (\$99.99; www.adobe.com), Corel Paintshop Pro (\$129.99; www.corel.com), Microsoft Digital Image Suite (\$99.95; www.microsoft.com), and other programs have top-notch editing tools, as well as features designed to help you organize and search your collections.

A few programs, such as Photoshop Elements, strive to be everything you

Archive For Life

You want future generations to enjoy your photos, and that means finding the best way to archive both printed and digital images. With digital photos, it's very difficult to anticipate whether future technologies will even be able to read data stored on CDs, DVDs, or hard drives because these formats change so quickly. In addition, data tends to break down on all of these storage mediums. Your best bet is to make copies of your backup media every two or three years, updating to new formats as necessary. You can also store your photos to your own Web site because, in its future form, the Internet may still serve well as a permanent repository for photo files.

Archiving printed photos is a matter of slowing down the inevitable degradation process. Store your photos in an acid-free album and use photo corners instead of tape or glue. Shield the prints with page protectors, but avoid those made of PVC, which will ultimately ruin your photos. Place completed albums in a cool, dry, and dark room that gets plenty of fresh air. A metal or fireproof cabinet placed in a closet is a safe bet. ●

need for photo manipulation. This program automatically detects when you connect your flash card reader to your PC, prompts you to rename your files, and begins downloading them to a folder.

Many similar organizer programs also come with tools designed to help you quickly attach keyword tags to specific images after you've transferred them. In other words, you don't actually rename the file; for example, you just

apply the keyword "puppy" to all of your images of dogs, and when you sort by the word puppy, you'll see every dog photo with that tag. You can use a free program such as Picasa (www.picasa.google.com) to create keyword-based albums.

Catalog Your Backups

Of course, organizing all of your photos neatly won't do you a lick of good if your hard drive crashes. That's why you should back up all of your photos to another storage device, such as a second hard drive (check out Western Digital's portable Passport hard drives [\$169.99; www.wdc.com]), CD-ROMs, or DVDs.

If you decide to back up your photos to optical discs, you can use a marker to indicate each disc's contents and then file your discs in a box. And if you worry about finding specific photos on those discs, you can use a program such as iView Media (\$49.99; www.iview-multimedia.com) to help you catalog and search your entire collection, even if many of your photos are on discs instead of your hard drive.

Future File Finders

If you think image organization is too frustrating no matter which renaming or resorting techniques you employ, look to the future. Software developers are already fine-tuning programs that can identify shapes and colors in images, and it likely won't be long before you're searching photos by specific color and other image characteristics instead of keywords. For now, though, use a little foresight and care when handling your images. Even a basic photo filing system will help you find files more easily than leaving folders scattered randomly across your hard drive. ☐

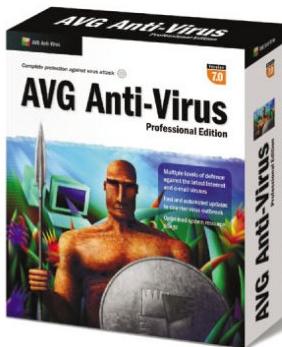
BY NATHAN CHANDLER

The best testimonial from 25 million users: They barely realize they use us!

With more than 25 million loyal users worldwide, Grisoft is the best choice for people and companies seeking maximum virus protection. With its easy and intuitive interface, Grisoft AVG Anti-Virus software doesn't bog down system resources; instead, it works quickly and seamlessly. Our singular focus on your protection lets YOU work - not worry. Our new product, AVG Anti-Virus plus Firewall, offers the best protection of your privacy against hackers.

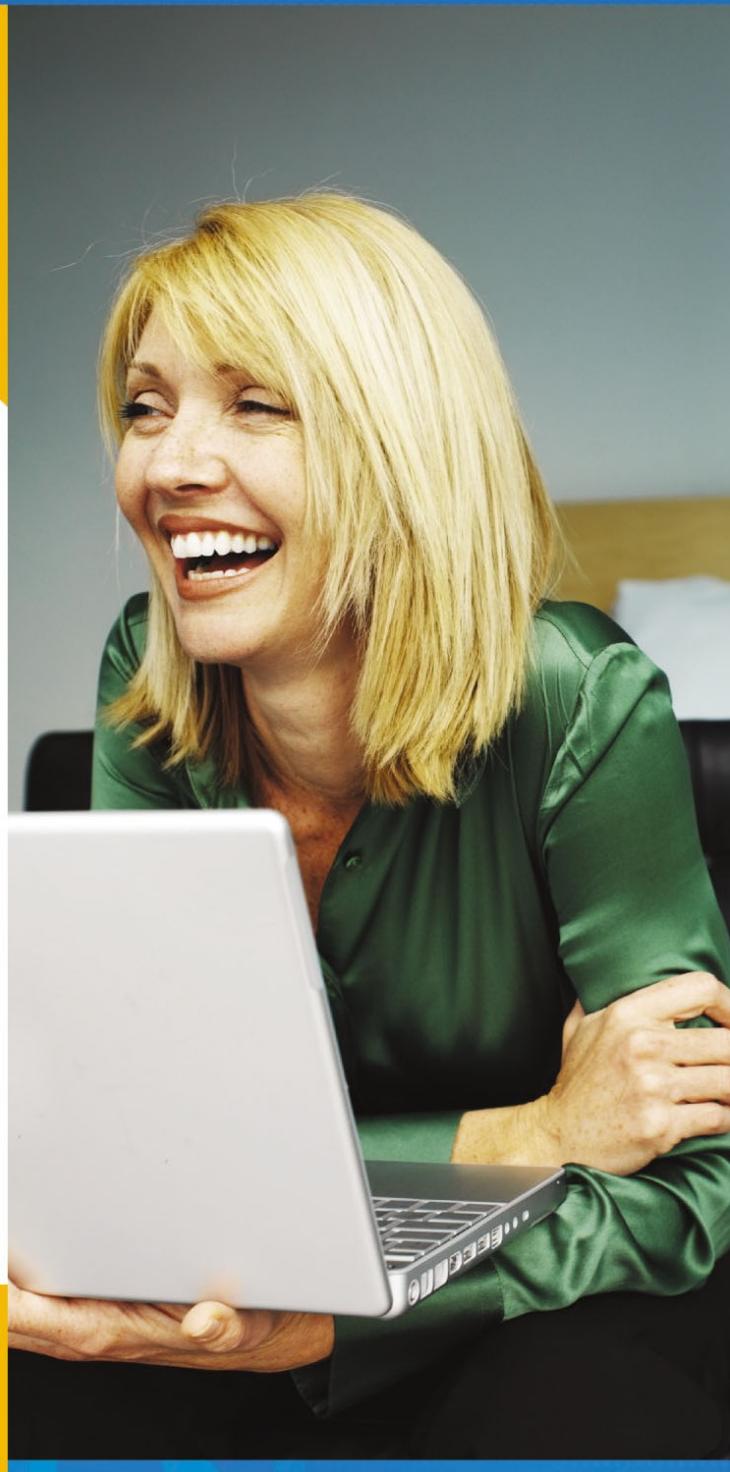
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What Size Of Memory Card Do I Need?

Don't Buy More Than You'll Use



FlashFolio • \$29.95
www.roadwired.com

t's been years since we've encountered a digital camera that didn't come with a token amount of storage capacity. Unfortunately, it's barely enough to get you started out of the box, with room only for a handful of photos when shooting at your camera's highest size and resolution settings.

While you can count on having to shop for a larger memory

card, how much capacity do you really need? Conventional wisdom may recommend buying as large a card as you can afford, but if you never come close to filling it up (say, if you transfer your files from your camera to your computer regularly), that's a waste of money that might be better spent elsewhere. This is less an issue than it used to be—as with everything tech-related, prices for flash memory have fallen—but the cost difference between a 512MB card and a 4GB card still amounts to a lot of DVDs or Starbucks mochas.

Consider Your Photography Habits

Before overspending, first analyze how you use your camera and nail down what you are expecting from your memory card.

How much storage does your camera need for each shot? Several factors influence a photo file's size, starting with the megapixel size of the camera's image sensor. With everything else being equal, the more megapixels the sensor has, the bigger the file will be.

The file's format also influences its size. All cameras shoot to JPEG, a format that uses data compression to save space. Cameras usually allow different quality settings, too, increasing compression to create even smaller files. Better cameras such as Canon's Digital Rebel XT (\$999.99 with lens; www.canonusa.com) will also let you shoot to RAW and/or TIFF formats, which preserve image data without compression, but require more space.

What size prints do you prefer? Megapixel size determines how large a print you can make while maintaining image quality. If you like 8- x 10-inch prints, you'll need more than three times the image data than you'll need for 4- x 6-inch prints, when using the same print quality.

If you look in your camera's manual, you'll likely find a table charting image quality, file size, and the number of shots that will fit on a particular size of memory card.

How often do you use your computer for photo files? If you're in the habit of copying your pictures to your computer hard drive after a shoot, you won't need as big a card as someone who lets her shots accumulate over days, weeks, or even months.

Your habits here could soon change, however. Cameras are now beginning to double as portable photo albums. Kodak's EasyShare-One (\$599.95; www.kodak.com) and Sony's DSC-N1 (\$499.95; www.sonystyle.com) both have 3-inch displays and permit onboard storage of hundreds of photos.

Are you shutter-happy? An industry rule of thumb is that photo buffs who switch from film to digital shoot two to three times as many pictures as they did before. And why not—there's no film to waste on experimentation. If this sounds like you, you'll need a much bigger card than someone who works from a "get it right the first time and move along" ethic.

Memory Card Menagerie

Memory cards come in several species—sometimes even subspecies—so make sure you shop for exactly what you need. Here's a quick rundown:

 **CF (CompactFlash).** In addition to memory, these relatively large cards also contain a controller chip, which enables high-speed data transfer, so they're commonly used by digital SLR cameras. They come in Type I and Type II classifications, the only difference being that Type II cards are about 1.7mm thicker, so don't get stuck trying to fit a Type II card into a slot sized only for Type I cards.

 **MicroDrive.** Rather than solid-state memory, these use a tiny hard drive housed in a CompactFlash Type II body. They're often compatible with cameras that can accept CF II cards. Because they have moving parts, they're more sensitive to impacts and draw more battery power, but compared to multigigabyte CF cards, can be a more economical alternative for high-capacity storage.

 **SD (Secure Digital) & MMC (MultiMediaCard).** These small cards are the most common type used by compact cameras. Externally, they're identical and can often be used interchangeably, but not always, because of internal technical differences.

 **xD Picture Card.** These, too, are very small cards, although Olympus and Fuji jointly developed the format for their cameras. With an adapter, they can also be used as CF cards.

 **Memory Stick.** These are used almost exclusively in Sony products. Memory Stick PRO cards are faster than the standard versions. Duo and PRO Duo cards are half-length and use an adapter to extend them to full-length when necessary.

 **SmartMedia.** This is the most basically constructed card—memory laminated onto thin plastic—and used only in older cameras. Their capacity tops out at 128MB, so their usefulness is limited now, and they're being phased out.

One Quick Example

If you look in your camera's manual, you'll likely find a table charting image quality, file size, and the number of shots that will fit on a particular size of memory card. Consider the table carefully when buying a memory card.

For instance, when using Nikon's popular D70S (\$1,299.99 with lens;

www.nikonusa.com), you'll find the following breakdown (we've abridged it here from 11 combinations) for a 256MB card:

- ❖ RAW: 23 images
- ❖ Largest, highest-quality JPEG: 73 images
- ❖ Smallest, lowest-quality JPEG: 950 images



Because we love big, arty prints, we nearly always shoot RAW files to avoid the data compression that is a result of JPG files. We also got into the routine of promptly transferring the photos to our computer for editing. When we considered these usage habits, we determined that a 512MB card was sufficient for our camera. That's roughly the equivalent of two standard rolls of film and works well with our shooting habits.

Crunch a few numbers, and you'll find your optimal card size too. 

BY BRIAN HODGE

Play Your Cards Right

Memory cards are certainly more rugged than film, but they still need care. Most of the dos and don'ts ensure that you'll maintain the integrity of a card's data structure. The following tips will help your cards enjoy a long, productive life.

- Always format a card in the camera in which you intend to use it, not a different camera or your computer.
- Don't treat your memory card like a hard drive, continually shooting to it and deleting from it with no maintenance. It's fine to let images accumulate, but if you're deleting a lot of them, as well, leftover data from deleted photos could eventually cause problems or even card failure. If you frequently

subject your card to a lot of two-way traffic, it's best to wrap up a work session by copying everything to your computer, then reformatting the card in-camera, so you start fresh the next time.

- Don't use an image-editing program such as Photoshop to rework photo files while they're still on the card. Copy them to your computer hard drive first.
- Never remove a card from the camera or a card reader while the card is being written to or read from. Insert and remove a card only when your camera is turned off and, before removing it from a card reader, eject it from your computer's desktop.
- Don't use your camera when its batteries are low.

Power loss, or even waning power, can corrupt image data and possibly damage the card.

- Static electricity can kill a card in a split-second. Discharge any static build-up from your fingers before handling a card. You need to be especially mindful of this in climates with dry air and low humidity.
- If your card appears to glitch after a shot, stop using it and change cards immediately. You may be able to recover your work on the suspect card with ImageRecall (\$25.99; www.imagerecall.com) or Lexar's Image Rescue (\$29.99; www.lexar.com).

Don't neglect to keep your cards protected when you're storing or transporting them,

either. When you buy them, they'll sometimes come in tiny plastic cases or sleeves; hang onto these because they make a good first line of defense.

When shopping for a camera bag, pick one that has plenty of padding and protective pouches inside that will keep cards secure during their downtime.

If you have several cards to keep track of, consider getting them their own case. RoadWired's Advanced Protection System Media/Accessory Wallet (\$19.95; www.roadwired.com) will hold several cards and shield them from bumps, weather, and even environmental pollutants. RoadWired's FlashFolio (\$29.95) holds up to 18 cards and has an indexing panel to keep track of them all. ●

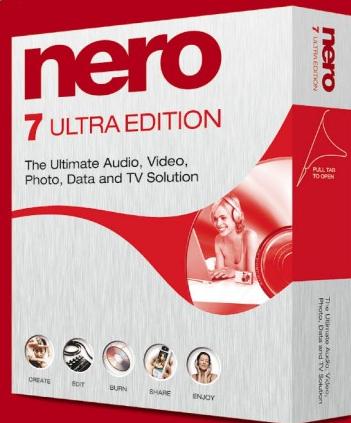
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Know How

One Problem, Three Solutions

BY BRIAN HODGE

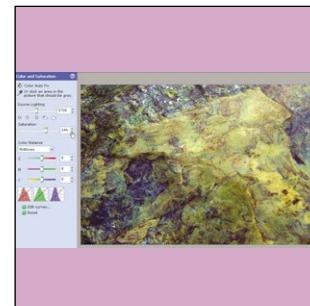
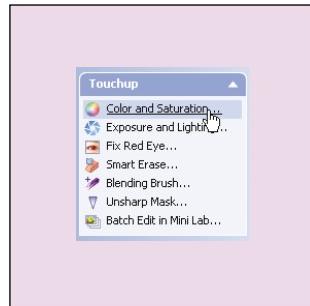


Color has more than one component. **Hue** designates the particular shade of a color, and **saturation** is the color's intensity. If you have an otherwise good photo that looks a little lackluster, increasing the saturation may make the picture more vibrant. Conversely, to give the photo a more subdued appearance, you'll desaturate to leech color intensity.

Using a photo editor's saturation control is important if you shoot photos in RAW format. This saves photos as uncompressed, minimally processed files that are the equivalent of film negatives; photos in RAW format offer creative control, but you'll have to work with them to bring out their full potential. Our sample RAW photo for the illustrations is a textural close-up of a large volcanic rock, which looks a little like an abstract oil painting.

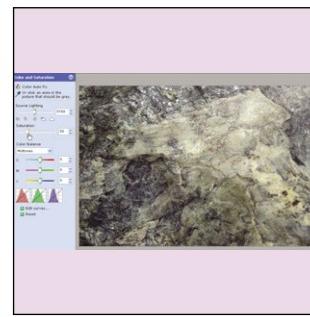
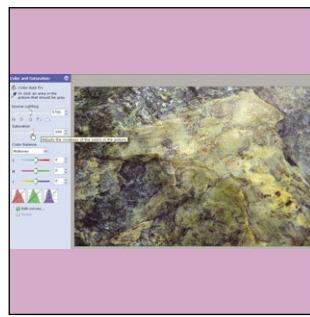
Microsoft Digital Image Pro 10

With your photo open in the workspace, select Color And Saturation from either the Touchup section of the Common Tasks pane or the Touchup menu at the top.



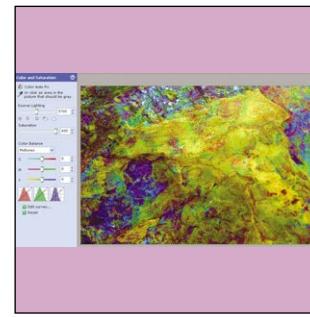
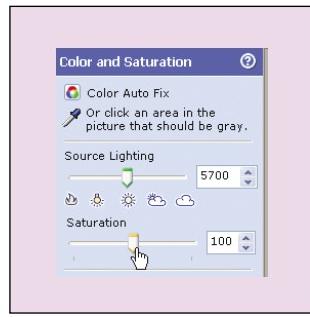
To increase the color saturation, drag the slider to a value between 101 and 400. To fine-tune the value, use the arrows, or type a setting in the value field.

The Activity panel provides several color-related tools, but the saturation control is a single slider near the middle.



To desaturate the colors in your photo, select a value between 99 and 0.

Instead of using positive values for increasing color saturation and negative values for desaturating the image, Digital Image Pro sets its neutral starting point at 100.



Beware of oversaturating your photo, however, unless you intend for it to look extremely unnatural.

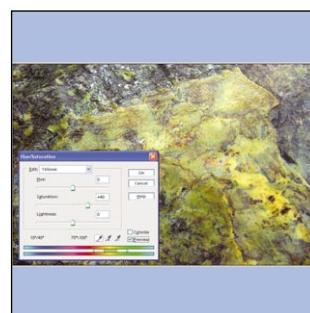
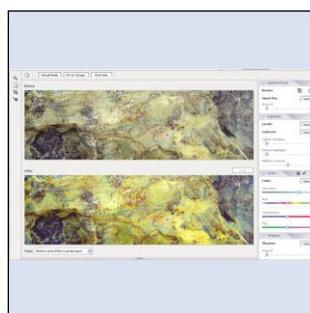
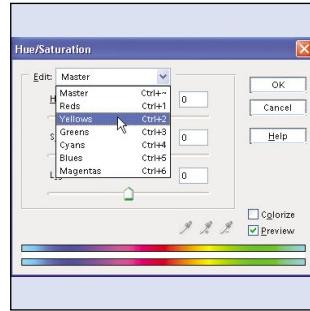
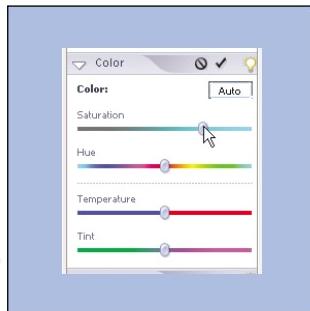
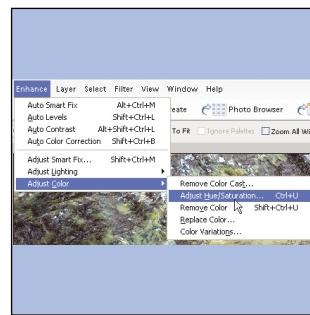
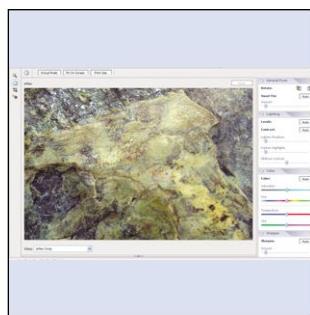
Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.0

Photoshop Elements provides a couple of ways to adjust saturation. For the simpler method, open your photo in the Quick Fix view.

In the Palette Bin on the right, under Color, is a slider for saturation.

Drag the slider to the right to increase saturation or to the left if you want to tone it down.

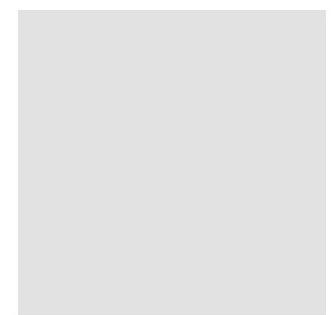
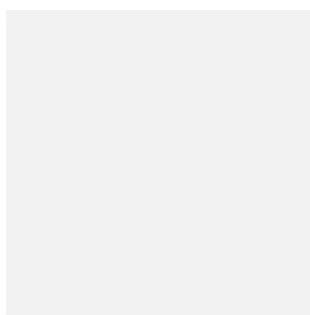
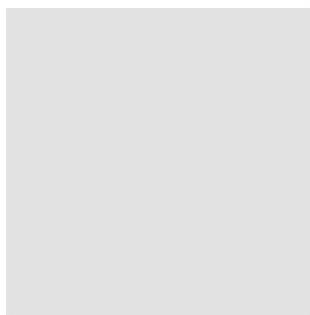
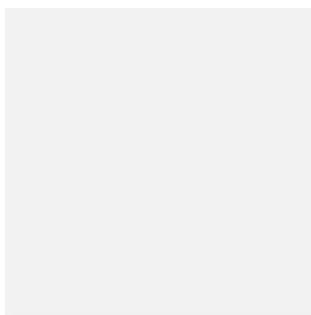
To compare the results with the original, select a Before And After option in the View menu at the lower-left.



This Quick Fix method applies color saturation to the entire photo. With the second method, available in both the Quick Fix and Standard Edit views, you can flex much more control. Click the Enhance Menu, choose Adjust Color, and select Adjust Hue/Saturation.

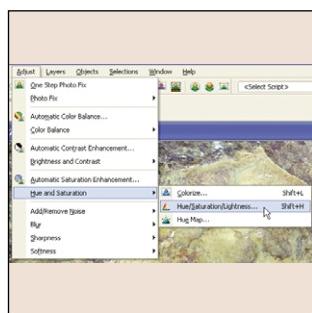
Here, saturation is the middle slider. A drop-down menu lets you direct the saturation toward the whole photo (the Master option) or the six basic color channels: red, yellow, green, cyan, blue, and magenta. To compare changes with the original, toggle the Preview checkbox.

Yellow dominates our sample image; we brought it out by selecting the Yellow channel and leaving the others alone. You can select any or all of the channels and adjust the saturation for each. This lets you try emphasizing a blue sky or enriching someone's red sweater for creative effect.



Jasc Paint Shop Pro 9

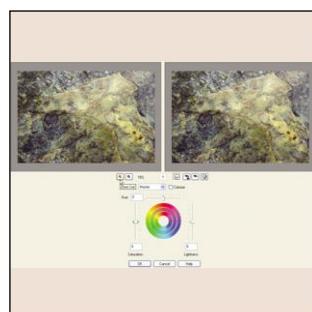
Open the Adjust menu and select Hue And Saturation and then Hue/Saturation/Lightness.



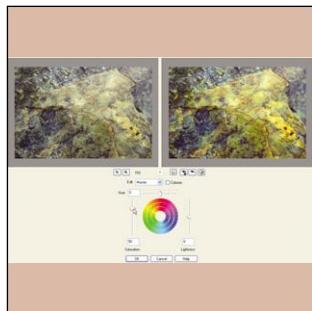
This opens an interactive window with Before and After preview panes at the top. The main controls are almost identical to those in Photoshop Elements, just arranged differently, with the Saturation slider on the left.



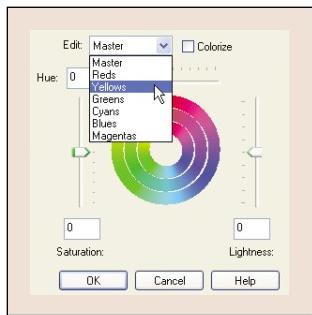
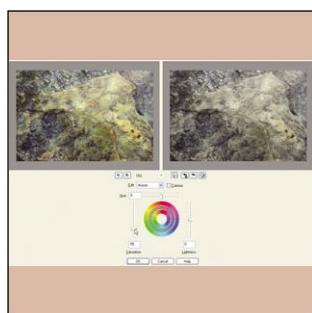
You may want to click the window's Maximize button to enlarge it to the size of your screen. This will expand the size of the preview panes, giving you much more room to zoom out so you can see the full shot.



To increase saturation, drag the slider upward to a value between 1 and 100 or enter a value in the data field.



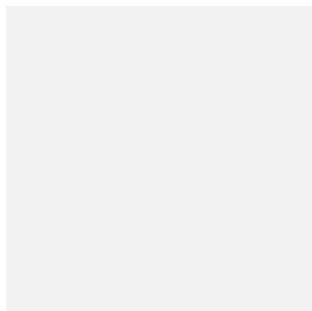
To desaturate the image, set the value between -1 and -100.

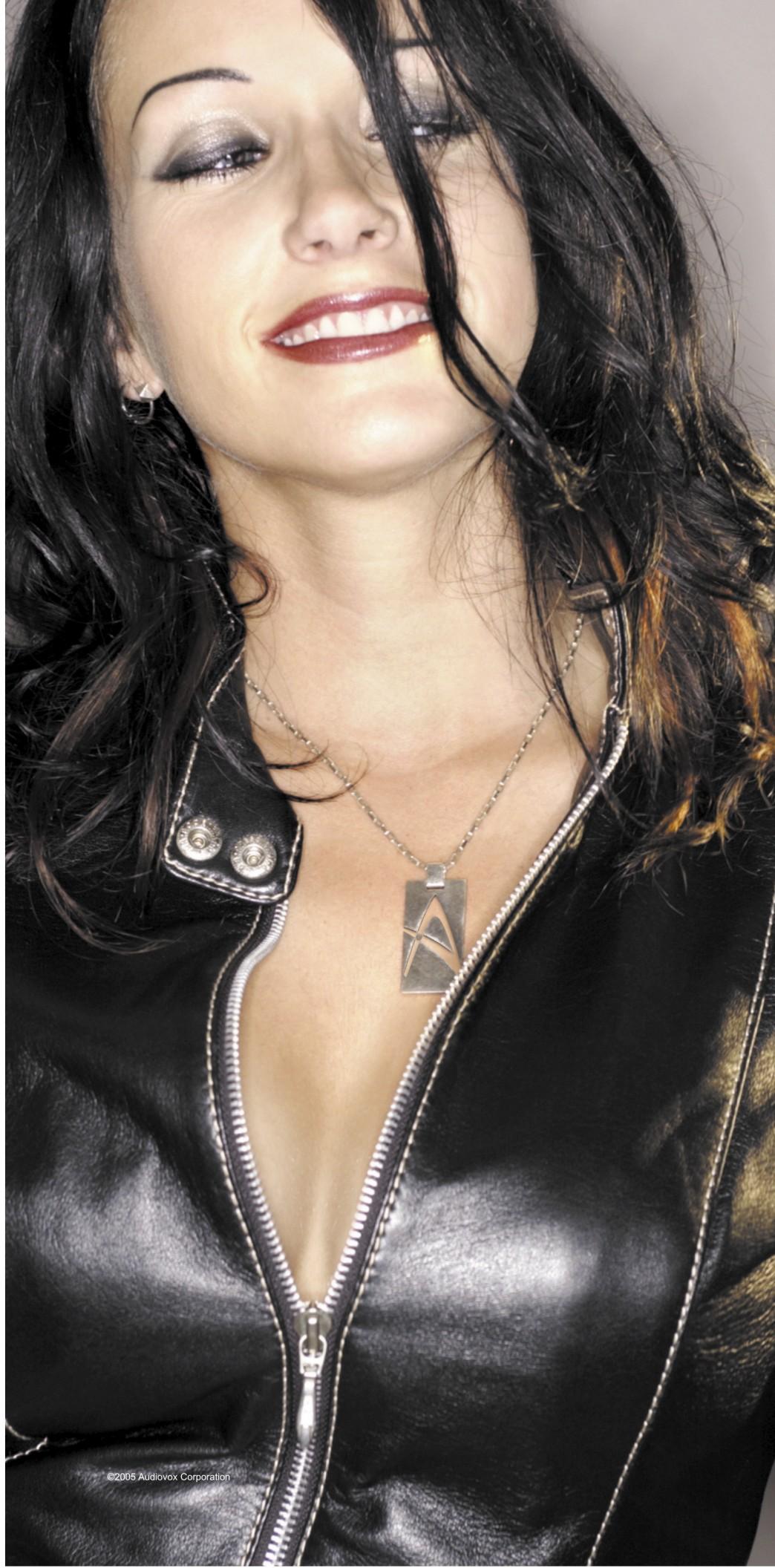


The same as in Photoshop Elements, Paint Shop Pro's default setting applies saturation adjustments to the entire photo, called Master here, too. However, you can use the Edit drop-down menu to select any of the same six color channels for individual tweaking.



Again, we've selected the Yellow channel so that the increased saturation affects it alone.





Cool accessories.

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tips Record History

1

Put On Your Editor's Hat

Even the most captivating video footage can benefit from a little ruthless editing. Use your favorite video editing program to weed out the less interesting bits. You can help your kids rearrange scenes to create a better story and add titles, audio, music, and special effects. Keep in mind that special effects, including transitions, can be as overused as they can be effective. Focus on content, not flash. While you're in the video editing program, capture a collection of interesting still images and save them for later. You can take the stills from several movies and turn them into a slide show based on a common theme, such as birthdays, holidays, or home-improvement projects.

2

Store Your DVDs For The Long Haul

There are some simple things you can do to ensure that your DVD time capsule will be around for a long time. Handle the DVD only by the edges. Don't write directly on the DVD unless you use special DVD-safe marking pens. Always put the DVD back in its case when you are finished with it. Store the DVD vertically, not horizontally, in a cool, dry place.

3

Direct Neighborhood Films

Closer to home, your kids can make permanent records of your home and neighborhood. Get some of the neighbors in on the act. (If you haven't met them yet, asking them to take part in some of your video projects could be a great way to break the ice.) Have a neighborhood decorating contest for an upcoming holiday or throw a block party and interview the guests. Wander through your house and record decorating schemes, furniture arrangements, and your family's favorite personal items, including toys and knickknacks. Get before and after footage of any home-improvement projects or note the way the backyard changes from season to season.

4

Create A Video Time Capsule

Every city and town has its own character, something we often don't appreciate until we move away. Put your kids in charge of the family camcorder and ask them to capture things that make their corner of the world special. They might grab a front row seat at the annual parade or fair and capture the best moments on tape or stroll downtown and record the local color, including businesses, store displays, and historic points of interest. Don't forget seasonal decorations and mall displays, their schools, or the park.

5

Design An Interesting Cover

Take a still image that captures the essence of the movie and make it the focal point of the DVD's cover or combine several images into a collage. Put a title on the spine of the case to make it easier to find on the shelf or in a drawer and use the back cover to write a capsule review of the DVD, including date(s), the subjects or events, and a cast of characters. If you don't already own CD/DVD labeling software, two good choices are Roxio's Label Creator (part of Easy Media Creator; \$79.95; www.roxio.com) and Acoustica CD/DVD Label Maker (\$21.95; www.acoustica.com).



BY TOM NELSON AND MARY O'CONNOR

Gift Of The Month

Spectare KeyPix Digital Picture Key Chain

February is here, and Valentine's Day is upon us. But who says you have to limit your Valentine-giving to your sweetheart? We think that Valentine's Day is a great reason to give a thoughtful gift to anyone you love—sweetheart, family member, or friend—just because. Every month we feature a gift you can buy for less than \$50 that we think someone you know would love to unwrap. And this month we've chosen the Spectare KeyPix Digital Picture Key Chain from Tao Electronics (www.taoelectronics.com) as a great way to say "I love you" to, well, to anyone.

The Digital Brag Book

It's no secret that new parents and grandparents like to show off snapshots of their littlest addition. We all know grandmas who whip out their photo album bursting with pictures if you so much as look their way. And, really, who can blame them? Grandbabies are something to be proud of. But not everyone has the room (or desire) to carry around an old-fashioned "brag book" filled with 4- x 6-inch prints. We know we certainly don't.

That's why we think the Spectare KeyPix Digital Picture Key Chain is a better option. Because keys are one of those items that almost everyone carries—men and women, young and old—you won't have to add to your

already overflowing purse or pockets. All you have to do is accessorize your key ring. And the KeyPix is so light (it weighs only 4 ounces) that you won't even notice it. And although women may be particularly drawn to KeyPix, we think dads and grandpas will be just as proud to be able to show off their family photos anytime, anywhere.

Easy As Pie

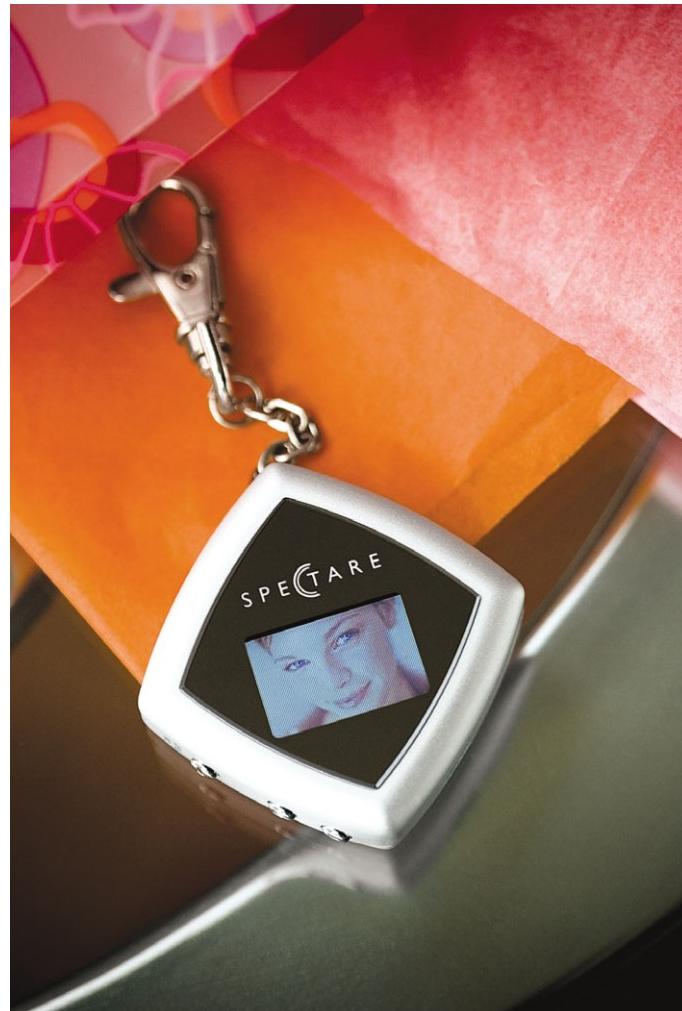
With KeyPix, the lucky recipient can store up to 56 pictures (depending on the resolution) on the 512KB of internal memory and have them ready to show off at the touch of a button. Pictures display on the 1-inch, full-color LCD and can be scrolled through manually or displayed using the slideshow option. To get your pictures from computer to keychain, install the included software, add and crop your photos, and download them to the keychain. (And recipients can recharge the Li-Ion battery through the USB connection or the included A/C adapter.)

Spectare KeyPix Key Chains are available in different shapes, including a circle, square, and diamond. And although the Tao Electronics Web site lists the MSRP as \$59.99, we found the KeyPix at several online retailers for less than \$50. At press time,

for example, Sharper Image had KeyPix available for \$49.95 (www.sharperimagebest.com/tm261.html).

So what are you waiting for? Give the gift of memories this Valentine's Day and let the ones you love brag in style. **CE**

BY JOY MARTIN



Video Calling Has Aunt Jill Seeing Double



Jan. 16, 2004, was far from an average day for sisters Holly Adams and Jill Thomas. At 1:30 p.m., Holly was rushed to a St. Louis hospital for an emergency C-section. She was only six months into her pregnancy, but the twins weren't going to wait any longer. When Jill heard the news, she took the first flight out of San Francisco airport and was by Holly's side that evening.

The two sisters have always been close, sharing life's most important occasions together. They grew up in Omaha, moved to Dallas to attend college and begin their careers, and just recently relocated to cities more than 2,000 miles apart.

Daily phone calls filled the gap, until Holly announced that she was pregnant with twins. It was at that point that Jill knew that listening to her sister describe the physical changes she was undergoing just wasn't going to be enough. She wanted to see them with her own eyes. She also knew that once the babies arrived, she didn't want to miss a single moment of their growth and development.

Because moving to the Midwest was not an option for Jill, an attorney, she started

to investigate videoconferencing systems. She was surprised to learn that the software had come a long way from the postage-sized, choppy images she remembered from just a few years back. In fact, MSN Messenger, the same software she and Holly relied on for instant messaging, had a video feature that was free.

She quickly bought two Web cams and sent one to Holly. They each downloaded the latest version of MSN Messenger and were seeing each other within the hour. Because both were already familiar with Instant Messaging, initiating their first Video Conversation was easy. Since then, MSN Messenger has added a synchronized audio and video application, called Video Conversation, so that Holly and Jill can see and talk to each other whenever they want.

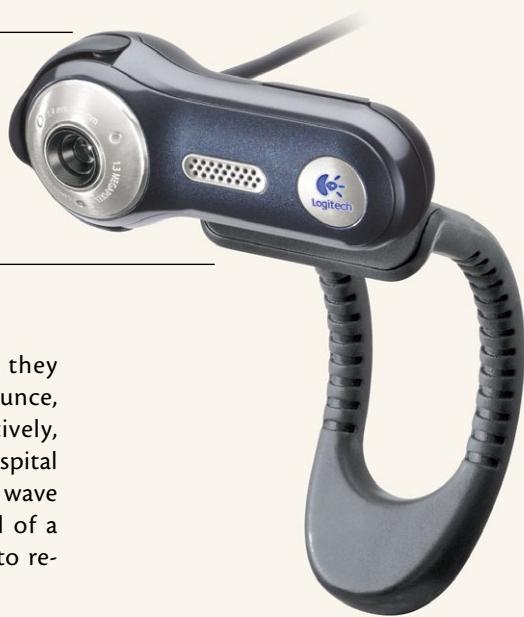
Holly and Jill are part of a growing number of enthusiastic Web cam owners who are using the technology to make a better connection over great distances. Computers are more powerful and Web cams are more affordable than ever. (Logitech offers Web cams that range from \$29 to \$129.) Faster Internet access has dramatically improved the quality of video and audio, while the applications for Web cams have become extremely easy to use. Some of the best applications, including MSN Video Conversation and Skype 2.0, are free.

"Phone calls, instant messaging and email are great for daily communication, but sometimes you just want to see the face of that special friend or family member when you are talking to them," said Gina Clark, Logitech's director of product marketing for Internet communications. "It's so easy to actually see and talk to loved ones using video calling. Once people try it, they won't go back to only making phone calls."

Life With Twins: Expect The Unexpected

Upon her arrival in St. Louis, Jill was directed to the NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) to meet James and

With high-quality video and a built-in mic, the Logitech QuickCam Fusion Web cam is a perfect choice for video calling with friends and family.



Louise. Unfortunately, because they weighed in at just 1 pound, 1 ounce, and 2 pounds, 1 ounce, respectively, each would require a lengthy hospital stay. Jill could do no more than wave to them through the glass wall of a NICU incubator before she had to return to San Francisco.

"Leaving the babies after just three days was really difficult," said Jill. "It helped to know that once they were home, I could easily see them regularly by using the Web cam." Little did she know at the time how valuable that access would be.

Within weeks, Holly learned that the babies were born so early that their immune systems were compromised. As a result, the doctors warned, any exposure outside the home would need to be limited during the babies' first year to prevent infection.

"For almost a year, we had to live life in kind of a bubble," said Holly. "Being able to communicate with Jill using the Web cam gave me an outlet that was just invaluable."

That first year held a number of surprises the two sisters won't soon forget. James, the smaller of the two, battled pneumonia twice during his first six months, underwent surgery for a hernia, and required multiple blood transfusions.

"Our video sessions kept me involved in Holly's life in ways a phone call, or even a brief visit, could never have matched," said Jill. "There were several times when I could read Holly's facial expressions to know if she was really stressed or if she was doing OK."

And Baby Makes Three

Although it was a terribly rough start, James and Louise recently celebrated their first birthdays and are doing well. Aunt Jill has proudly watched them every step of the way.

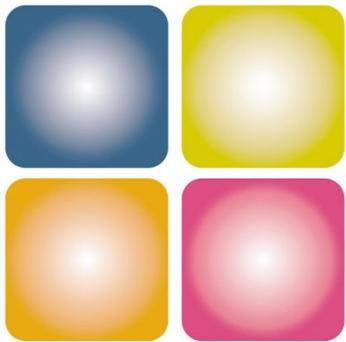
"I've been able to see them smile, watch them crawl, and finally see them take their first steps," she said. "The benefit of our Video Conversation sessions is the real-time interaction, so I feel like I'm talking directly to them and can see their reactions. It's really the next best thing to being there."

Recently Holly shared a new secret with her sister during a video conversation. She's pregnant with her third child.

"What a wonderful surprise," said Jill. "Not only did Holly tell me the good news, but she was able to share sonogram images from her doctor visit earlier that day. Needless to say, a picture is worth a thousand words—we're all very excited."

For more information about Web cams and video calling, visit www.logitech.com.





TECHNOLOGY IS A *Girl's Best Friend*

The 2006 Winners

When it comes to what women value most in their CE products, functionality is first on the list. This is something that we at *CE Lifestyles* have known for ages, but it seems that a lot of manufacturers haven't yet caught on; an added mirror or pink hue does not a CE device for women make.

What Do We Want?

But women look for other features in a CE device, too. A recent survey conducted by the CEA (Consumer Electronics Association) shows that, besides being highly functional, women want devices to be easy to use, reliable, and lightweight. While this all sounds fantastic (who doesn't want a device that's functional, easy-to-use, and reliable, after all?), it's more fun to dig in and see exactly which devices are perfect for you or the women in your life, and the CEA's Technology Is A Girl's Best Friend award does just that.

The Award. To be considered for the award, manufacturers

submitted to the CEA new devices they are marketing to female consumers. Then, the CEA's in-house analysts and several journalist judges (including me) evaluated the products and selected the winners based on information from the survey mentioned above. This time, almost 250 products were submitted, a record for Technology Is A Girl's Best Friend, and double what the CEA received in 2004. The winners were announced on Dec. 1 of last year, and the products were showcased at this year's CES (Consumer Electronics Show) in Las Vegas.

The Products

Technology Is A Girl's Best Friend features winners in eight product categories: Audio, Computers, Digital Imaging, Laptop Bags, Mobile /Automotive Electronics, Portable Audio, Television, and Wireless. Although the products in all these categories are excellent, we're going to focus on a few select products from the following three categories: Digital Imaging, Laptop Bags, and Portable Audio.



HP Photosmart R817
• \$299.99
• www.hp.com



Digital Imaging. Here at *CE Lifestyles*, we've found that the electronic devices that women are most interested in are digital cameras, so we were especially excited to see which one won the Technology Is A Girl's Best Friend award. One of the two winners in the Digital Imaging category is HP Photosmart R817 (\$299.99; www.hp.com), which has a 5MP resolution and an impressive 5X optical zoom (almost unheard of in this price category).

One of the things we like most about HP's Photosmart line is how simple and easy-to-use they are, and the R817 continues that tradition with its Real Life technologies feature, which is sort of like context menus for your photos. With this technology, you have in-camera red-eye and shading correction, among other features, which means you likely won't need touch-ups later. (A relief for those of us who like to simply shoot and print and don't want to mess with any software.)

For a busy woman who loves taking photos of her friends and family, as well as experimenting with artsy shots, the HP Photosmart R817 is an excellent camera.

Laptop Bags. Remember when, just a few years ago, we had to carry our notebook computers in big, bulky, industrial-looking bags that were heavy? They were often uncomfortable to carry, and let's face it, gray nylon doesn't really go with Ann Taylor wool. Lately, though, manufacturers have started offering laptop bags that are so feminine, elegant, and comfortable that you don't even need a computer to carry one.

Our favorite in the Technology Is A Girl's Best Friend showcase is Motion Systems' Icon Female Laptop Tote (\$99.99; www.beteshgroup.com). We're not normally into pastels, but the little pink faux suede accents at the top of the bag, as well as the pink quilting inside, offsets the serious classic black of the tote's body. (For those of you who would be interested in a different color, it's also available with red, green, or beige accents.) We also like the straps, which are comfortable despite how thin they are, and the overall size is excellent—we can carry our notebook, of course, but there's lots of room for a wallet, a novel, and a cell phone, too.

We also love how the laptop sleeve is removable, so it's easy to use the tote without the computer. (It would be perfect for carrying a change of clothes and some makeup for an overnight stay somewhere.)



Motion Systems' Icon Female Laptop Tote
• \$99.99
• www.beteshgroup.com

Portable Audio. It's not often that we're more interested in holding a CE device than using it, but that's the case with our favorite winner from the Portable Audio category, the Philips PSA612 Sport Audio Player (\$179; www.philips.com).

The shape of this MP3 player is fantastic, with gorgeous (and glossy) rounded edges, and it's comfortable to hold and carry. This is crucial because it's a sports model: Who likes carrying around a bulky player with sharp points when jogging?

We were surprised to find out that this player, although a model designed for athletes, isn't flash-based. The 4GB hard drive, however, is housed in a body that Philips calls "shock absorbing," and it features Philips' ShockLock technology, which locks music into the buffer memory and basically shuts down the hard drive, preventing any damage that might result from movement during a workout. We love this feature, because it offers a great alternative to flash-based MP3 players, which are usually a lot more expensive byte for byte and have much less memory than hard drive-based players.



Philips PSA612 Sport Audio Player • \$179 • www.philips.com

Friends Forever

It's unfortunate that we can't cover every winner in the showcase because they're all great products for women. To check out all the devices that won the Technology Is A Girl's Best Friend award, visit www.cesweb.org/techgirl and click on 2006 Honorees. 

BY KATIE SOMMER

The Return Of The Pod People

More Accessories For Your iPod

The iPod just keeps steam-rolling ahead in its utter domination of the portable digital music market. It continues to evolve, too. Since our first accessory roundup, "Invasion Of The Pod People" in the September 2005 issue (page 76-79), Apple

has retired the iPod mini and replaced it with the even slimmer nano, which, like the shuffle, uses flash RAM instead of a hard drive. As well, all the latest full-size iPods now play video.

With the accessory market as healthy as ever, we've corralled another 14 items

worth your consideration and list the compatibility for each accessory. "All iPods" means all five generations of full-size players (video iPods being the fifth), plus the mini, shuffle, and nano. "G" denotes generation. 

BY BRIAN HODGE

DLO Relaxed Leather Cases

\$34.99 to \$39.99
www.dlo.com

4 5

There are more cases than any other iPod accessory, but these are our new favorites. Made of leather that looks as though it's going to age as deliciously as an old bomber jacket, they come in six styles. Some are decorated with zigzag stitching (one resembles a football); others are festooned with patterns of rivets. Most clip to your belt or waistband, while your iPod stays safe behind a flip-front cover. Cutouts leave the vital connections and controls accessible. DLO also has several cases for other-sized iPods made of nonleather materials.



- 3 3G iPod
- 4 4G iPod
- 5 5G iPod
- m Mini
- n Nano
- s Shuffle

Griffin iTalk\$39.99 • www.griffintechnology.com

3 4

Need to record voice memos, lectures, or conversations to later prove you were right? This little add-on equips compatible iPods to take dictation. The recordings are lo-fi (8kHz/16-bit WAV files), but they're certainly clear enough to replay what was said, and they don't gobble up much storage space—about 940Kb per minute.

Belkin TuneCast II FM Transmitter\$39.99 • www.belkin.com

3 4 5 m n s

FM transmitters use vacant radio frequencies to wirelessly connect your iPod to a nearby receiver. Plug the TuneCast's attached cable into your iPod's audio jack, set a frequency on your home receiver or car radio, match it on the TuneCast, and press play. The unit can memorize four frequency presets, which will probably come in handy on the road, if you're driving into a radio station's range and have to switch. You may need to fine-tune the TuneCast's position to maximize reception and minimize fuzz, but once we found the spot, the connection remained clear and stable.

Sony S2 Sports Street Style MDR-G57G Headphones\$29.99 • www.sonystyle.com

3 4 5 m n s

Whether it's a stability problem or a comfort issue, some people just don't get along with earbuds. If you're looking for an alternative, here's a worthy contender. These 'phones fit around the upper back of your neck rather than over your head, so they won't mess up your hair. They use supports over the ears to stay secure. We couldn't dislodge them even while running a few miles, yet they're plenty comfy. And they sound great, with an expansive quality that really seems to wrap the music around your head.

Klipsch iGroove Shelf System\$279.99 • www.klipsch.com

3 4 5 m n s

In our previous roundup, Klipsch's iFi was the pick of the litter among systems enabling the iPod's sound to fill the entire room. But what if you don't have space for 40-odd pounds of speakers? This wedge-shaped player will easily fit on a shelf; although it lacks the kick-in-the-gut wallop of the iFi (it has no subwoofer, which accounted for most of the iFi's weight), it still sounds superb. Technically, it's meant for iPods with dock connectors, but it comes with a cable that will let you connect earlier iPods and any other portable player with a headphone minijack.

**Tunewear Tuneclip**\$9.95 • www.tunewear.com

3 4 5 m n s

Just try telling us this hasn't happened to you: You and your iPod are happily going about your business, when something snags the audio cord and yanks the earbuds out of your ears. The Tuneclip aims to make such mishaps a thing of the past. It's a spool that clips to your clothing, around which you can wind the excess cord. That's it! Simple, cheap, and effective.

JBL On Tour

\$99.95 • www.jbl.com

3 4 5 m n s

If you're a frequent flyer who wants a set of speakers for your hotel rooms, this is a great option. For traveling, the unit slides together into a compact, curved shell, rather like an elongated hip flask. When open, the speakers are revealed, and you'll connect it to your iPod's earphone jack and a wall outlet (it will also run off four AAA batteries). Because of the small speakers, dense, bottom-heavy material doesn't come off well, but almost everything else above heavy metal sounds clear and open.



DLO HomeDock

\$99.99 • www.dlo.com

3 4 5 m n

Given a bit of go-between hardware, your iPod can fit right into your home entertainment center, and this is the most flexible option we've seen. It's a small, rectangular dock that uses RCA cables to send the audio to your stereo or surround-sound receiver. If you have a photo or video iPod, you can even route the visuals to your TV. The HomeDock includes a remote, which you can use to control audio and slideshow functions and move between playlists, something many iPod remotes ignore.



On The Move

The iPod is all about mobility, of course, but there's a big difference between a walk through the park and a drive across the country. These items will help you tune in for the long haul.

MCE Technologies iTravel iPod Accessory Kit

\$54.99 • www.mcetech.com

3 4 5 m n s

This is a zippered hardshell grab bag of goodies that you might find useful on the road... or at home, too. The bounty includes a cassette adapter for playing the iPod through your car stereo, a charger that plugs into your car's lighter, and a headphone splitter so two people can listen (handy on airplanes). There's also a protective silicon sleeve for 4G/5G players, extra earbuds, and USB and FireWire cables. The nifty thing about these cables (and on the earbuds and cassette adapter, as well) is that they're retractable, so you don't leave loose lengths flopping around. Many items here are also available separately or in smaller kit configurations.



Griffin iSqueez

\$9.99 • www.griffintechnology.com

3 4 5 m n s

If you're playing an iPod through your car audio system using an option that doesn't include its own mount—a cassette adapter, for instance—it's better not to leave the player rattling around loose. The iSqueez is a rubberized cradle that fits into a cup holder and positions the iPod at an angle so the display remains visible. One side is molded for full-size iPods, and the other for the iPod mini; the shuffle and nano will fit too, just not as snugly.



Software Utilities

They may be outnumbered by hardware accessories, but software utilities are an important sector of iPod life. After all, what is an iPod but a small, highly specialized computer?

Wind Solutions CopyPod (\$19.90; www.copypod.net). Using iTunes, you can import music into your iPod all you want, but if you try to drag a song back to your computer's hard drive, the program just ignores you. Yep, in iTunes, the trip is one-way. CopyPod is a Windows utility that corrects this omission, enabling handy tasks such as backing up your iPod contents and moving your music to a new PC or new iPod.

Sci-Fi Hi-Fi PodWorks (\$8; www.scifihifi.com/podworks). This does the same thing for Macs.

Griffin iFill (\$19.99; www.griffintechnology.com). With this cross-platform program, you can stock your iPod with fresh material even during its downtime. It connects to your choice of hundreds of Internet radio stations and records the audio stream directly to your iPod. Songs are saved separately under a new playlist, so you can skip, delete, and manage them as you do any other track.

Prosoft TuneTech (\$59; www.prosofteng.com). The most comprehensive iPod utility available, TuneTech contains an entire suite of tools for hard drive-based iPods. In addition to backup and copy functions, you can treat your iPod's drive for various maladies (or better yet, run preventative maintenance), optimize it for better performance, and recover deleted files. At press time, TuneTech is available only for Macs, although a Windows version is coming. ●

COMPLETE THE DREAM...HOME



Envision a home that automatically anticipates all of your needs. Just before going to bed, you roll over and touch the "Good Night" button, which turns on the motion activated outdoor lights, arms the security system, locks the doors and gently fades off all the lights in the house. Sitting in your home theater, you lightly press the button labeled "Movie" and the shades are drawn, the lights are dimmed, the projection system turns on along with the surround-sound system, and the movie starts. A Vantage system manages all of today's technology and provides complete control to every system in your house, putting the finishing touches on your dream home.



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Splurge With Your Tax Refund

CE For The Whole House

Images of tax season often portray harried, last-minute filers waiting in snaking lines at the post office on April 15, as the clock ticks inexorably toward midnight. There are other, less well-publicized images, however, of happy refund recipients tearing into the brown envelopes, planning how to spend the return. If you're anticipating a refund and haven't yet decided what to spend it on, you can

read about some of the items on our wish lists for ideas. Typically, we write about digital cameras, cell phones, and other more personal CE devices. Here, we'll instead highlight some devices and appliances we dream about for our homes but don't usually cover on these pages. **ce**

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

Front & Back Doors

Smarthome Keypad Doorlock

\$149.99

www.smarthome.com/51000l.html

Pretty and practical (and available in left- or right-handed brass or silver), this Keypad Doorlock lets you gain access to your home using a six-digit code instead of keys. You can program just one code for the entire family or give everyone his or her own code. Programming new codes takes only a few seconds, and the system accommodates 200 codes. The system requires four AAA batteries, and it comes with a couple of keys, so you can override the keypad in an emergency.



This keyless entry device is an ideal workaround for parents with children who frequently lose keys. When you're home and you'd like to leave the door

unlocked, you can press a button to disengage the locks. And here's another nifty security feature: Let's say you're going on vacation, and your neighbor is watching your home; instead of giving him a key, program a unique code that he can use while you're gone and delete it after you've returned.

You can program as many as 200 codes, which you may never use as a home owner, but that may come in handy for a small-business owner. At your small business, each employee can have his or her own code, and you can delete the codes of employees who've moved on, rather than change locks or reprogram security devices.

Garage

DEI Viper 591XV
\$479.99
www.directed.com

If you've ever left your car outside on a cold winter's night, you know what a shock to the system it is the next morning when you jump into the frigid vehicle with its frost-coated windows. Running out to start your car in the sub-zero weather is a hassle; you have to bundle up and interrupt whatever you're doing, and that hardly lets you escape the bone-chilling cold! These are good reasons to splurge on a remote starter. As long as your car is an automatic with fuel injectors, the DEI Viper 591XV can start your iced-over car, while you finish putting on your makeup in your toasty bathroom.



This device lets you remote-start your car from the warmth of your home or office (and even as you approach it in a parking garage), and you can set it to turn on the heater and defroster (or AC in the warmer months), so the car is comfortable, and the windows are clear when you're ready to go. With the two-way remote, you can also turn off and lock the car if you had to leave it running for some reason.

This nifty device has far more features than we have space, but we especially like the 2-Way Responder LCD Transceiver, which confirms that your car has started by flashing a little puff-of-exhaust icon. You'll also know that your car has started because the parking lights come on, and you can program them to flash if necessary. For instance, if your car is parked on the street during a rain or snow storm, your flashers will make it more visible to other drivers. In warmer weather, you can program the remote to roll down your windows or turn on your AC when it starts your car as you push your cart of groceries through the grocery store parking lot. (These functions may require additional labor, parts, and expense when you have the system installed.) You can also program the remote to operate your power locks, so you don't need a separate fob to pop the trunk or unlock the doors.

Cellar/Storeroom

Danby Silhouette DWC2121BLS
\$999.99
www.danby.com



It's hard to believe that anything as delightful as wine has enemies, but it does: Heat, light, and air (specifically, oxygen) are all especially harmful to it. And if you store your wine collection improperly, you risk letting the enemies destroy its delicate flavors. There are an amazing number of "Don'ts" when it comes to storing wine: Don't stand up the bottles; the cork will dry out, and air will get in and cause oxidation, which destroys the wine. Don't store bottles on top of your refrigerator; the heat from the motor can harm the wine. Don't let your bottles just lie on your cabinet; the temperature extremes in your own home, especially if the bottles are exposed to direct sunlight, can also negatively affect the flavor of the wine.

Rather than worry about rendering your collection unpalatable, consider investing in a storage cooler. We like the black and stainless Danby Silhouette. You can store and protect 54 bottles of your favorite wines in this efficient cooler. Its tempered-glass twin doors keep UV light from your bottles, and the dual LEDs let you program temperature settings on each side of the cabinet to accommodate wines that respond to different temperatures. Each door locks, preventing inquisitive children from opening the doors. The cooler also has a Humidity Reservoir, which keeps moisture in the cooler, so the corks don't dry out.

Living Room/Family Room

Panasonic EP3202KU RealPro

Massage Chair

\$3,499

www2.panasonic.com

Although this somewhat clunky-looking massage chair may not blend seamlessly with your living-room décor, you'll forget all about how it looks when you sit down.

The chair scans your



back and shoulders for about 20 seconds and then its heads conform to your back, neck, and shoulders and begin massaging. The foot rest is equipped with compression air bags to massage your feet and calves for a more relaxing, full-body experience. There are four settings that provide different intensities of massage, including Shiatsu

and deep tissue. If you've enjoyed a particularly relaxing massage, you can save the settings and enjoy the treatment again another day. You may control the intensity of the massage, as well. For a more invigorating session, increase the intensity; conversely, if you're muscles are a little sore from shoveling snow, you can decrease the intensity until your pain subsides. If you alter settings, you can also program them into the memory and save them. The memory accommodates setting preferences for three people.

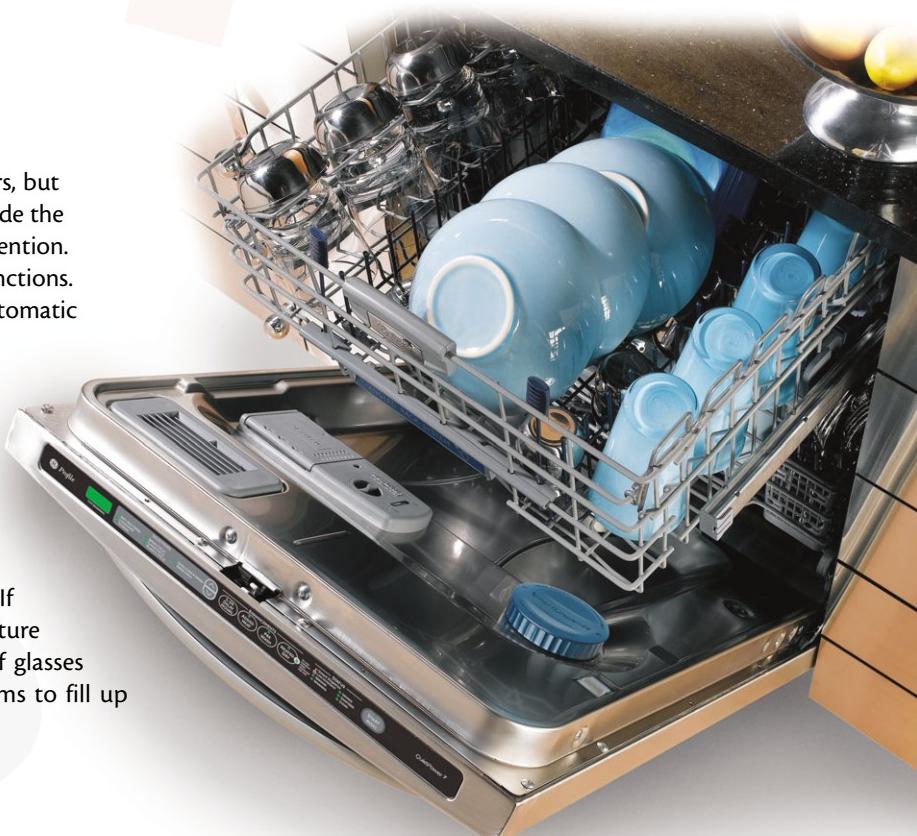
Kitchen

GE Profile Dishwasher With SmartDispense Technology

\$1,429

products.geappliances.com

We don't normally get too excited about dishwashers, but the sleek, stainless finish (with its controls hidden inside the door) on the GE Profile immediately grabbed our attention. It didn't waver as we perused the impressive list of functions. Fill the Profile once a month or so with a bottle of automatic dishwasher liquid, and it'll be dispensed as needed according to sensors that measure the dirt on the dishes and the hardness of the water. You can also use the delayed timer to set the dishwasher to start anywhere from one to 24 hours later to work around showers and laundry. We were also impressed with the plastics-only cycle, which adjusts the temperature, so your storage containers get clean but don't melt. If that's not enough, the single-rack wash is a great feature that lets you wash an energy-efficient small load of glasses and other items on the top rack, which always seems to fill up long before the bottom rack.



tips

Winter Activities For The Kids

1

Create A Photo Collage

There are limitless subjects your kids could select to make a photo collage: the family pet, friends, winter landscapes, or themselves dressed up as their favorite characters and heroes. They can create the collage with prints on a poster board or by using graphics software to combine the prints in one file. If the kids choose to photograph an event, such as their brother's basketball game or a day at the park sledding, have them also write about the activity in a newspaper-like story, complete with a byline and photo captions.

2

Document Family History

Imagine what documentary filmmaker Ken Burns could've done with today's technology when he was young. Encourage an appreciation for family history—and preserve precious memories—by helping your kids make a film or slide show. They can interview Grandpa or Grandma about what life was like when they were growing up and scan old family photos to create digital copies. Let them take pictures of extended family members to include, as well. When you've gathered all the photos and video clips, use a program such as the new Nero PhotoShow Deluxe 4 (\$29.99; www.nerophotoshow.com) to create a slideshow or DVD.

3

Start A Flat Stanley Project

Kids love the two-dimensional, globe-trotting Flat Stanley, a character that teachers use to help kids learn about other people and places. To start a Flat Stanley project, have your kids use a simple drawing program to draw and print out a paper version of Stanley or use the template on the official project Web site for schools (www.flatstanley.com). Then the kids should create a journal in which the recipients of the project can record their outings with Flat Stanley and insert photos and write a letter explaining what the project is about. Send the journal and packet to friends or family in another part of the country and encourage recipients to email you and your kids when the packet arrives at a new destination.

4

Make A Party Favor CD

Unlike college students illegally swapping music files, there's a better way for kids to share their favorite tunes with each other. Use a music CD-burning program, such as Sonic RecordNow! (\$49.99; www.roxio.com), to help your kids create discs loaded with their music. Then, they can use them as favors to give away to friends at a party or give them as gifts when they're invited to a party. If your printer allows, the kids can create a personal touch on a printable CD by adding a photo.

5

Plan This Summer's Vacation

Quick—where was ice cream first made commercially? Not in the dairy state. Baltimore, home of the Orioles, melt-in-your-mouth crab cakes, and America's first umbrella factory, according to Baltimore.org. Your kids can learn fun facts about your summer vacation destination using the Web. Go online to find official sites of the cities, parks, attractions, states, or countries you'll be visiting. Encourage the kids to find an out-of-the-way place to visit, such as the National Soccer Hall of Fame in Oneonta, N.Y., through their research. Or let them use MapQuest to find some roads less traveled to take.



BY RACHEL DEROWITSCH

Lutron®: personalized one-touch dimming for your entire home.

Integrate all your lighting into one-touch keypads that are as personalized as your home with a HomeWorks® total lighting control system.

You can also integrate Sivoia QED™ quiet, electronic shade control to bring electric and natural light into one seamless system.

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First Glimpse Special Product Section

This special product section is produced in partnership with leading consumer electronics manufacturers and allows us to provide readers with the most timely product information possible.

Browse through these First Glimpse pages to learn about the latest hot products.

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Samsung HL-R5078W 50-inch 1080p HDTV With Digital Cable Ready Tuner	80
JVC KT-3000 SIRIUS Plug and Play Tuner	82
Kodak EasyShare One	84
Vantage InFusion, TouchPoint & Keypads	86



Toshiba RD-XS54 DVD Recorder

MSRP: \$699.99

www.tacp.toshiba.com



The Complete Package

It is simply the ultimate digital video recording machine. Toshiba's new RD-XS54 begins as a state-of-the-art, high-quality DVD recorder, then adds a built-in 250GB hard drive recorder. Begin TV recording with the touch of one button, then pause, skip ahead, or get an instant replay of your favorite scenes using your remote control.

The RD-XS54 is impressively flexible. A front-panel DV input makes connecting most digital camcorders quick and easy, allowing you to download and view your personal memories captured on home video. And when your hard drive is full, store your favorite home video content on DVD-R, DVD-RW, and DVD-RAM discs to create your own video library. Additionally, the HDMI™ interface delivers a one-wire connection for both audio and video signals to those HDTV's quipped with HDMI™ input, which enables this model to up-convert standard DVD signals to 1080i or 720p for enhanced picture display.

For easy access to television programming through the built-in tuner, TV Guide On Screen™ makes finding your favorite shows easy by displaying detailed program information on your TV's screen. Finally, Toshiba's Network NAVI feature lets you connect to the Web through your PC's broadband internet connection, enabling advanced features like remote scheduling via email and PC control of your DVD recorder. For

the ultimate in DVD recorder performance and flexibility, look no further than the RD-XS54 from Toshiba.

Visit www.tacp.toshiba.com for full features and to find a dealer near you.

Toshiba respects the rights of others. Its products are only intended for lawful recording, storage, and playback of authorized content and any other lawful use.

1. When referring to hard drive capacity, 1 GB = 1 Billion Bytes. Available capacity will be less with preloaded content and operating system. Actual formatted capacity may vary.

2. DVD-R/DVD-RW discs recorded by DVD-Video method can be played. Some discs may be incompatible due to recording format, laser pick-up and/or disc design.

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TV Guide On Screen is a trademark of Gemstar-TV Guide International and/or one of its affiliates.

TOSHIBA
Image is Everything.™

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Special Product Section



**Toshiba SD-P2800
Portable DVD Player**
MSRP: \$499.99
www.tacp.toshiba.com

Beautiful Pictures Everywhere

Now you can enjoy DVD entertainment wherever you are without sacrificing the DVD picture quality you love. Toshiba's top-of-the-line portable DVD player combines a full-featured DVD player with a high-quality LCD in a compact package that is perfect for viewing on the go. Sleek and stylish in design, the SD-P2800 is packed with features that make it an ideal player both on the road and at home. Its crisp, clear 9-inch diagonal LCD includes IPS (In Plane Switching) for more accurate colors, improved viewing angles and a faster refresh rate that produces sharper pictures from fast moving images. And with an up to four hour rapid charge battery, the SD-P2800 is perfect for long car trips or plane rides.

Digital Cinema Progressive Scanning is combined with ColorStream Pro® Component Video Outputs to produce a portable DVD player that is equally at home as the center of your home theater system.

The SD-P2800 doesn't just play back DVD movies. Because it is DivX® Home Theater Certified, it can play back compressed digital video files downloaded from the Internet on your per-

sonal computer and recorded on either a DVD-R or DVD-RW² disc. Plus, the built-in 4-in-1 Card Slot lets you view digital photos stored on several popular digital storage cards.

Visit www.tacp.toshiba.com for full features and to find a dealer near you.

1. Battery life and number of charge cycles will vary depending on use and settings. Rechargeable battery has a limited service life and may eventually need to be replaced.

2. DVD-R/DVD-RW discs recorded by DVD-Video method can be played. Some discs may be incompatible due to laser pick-up and disc design.

DivX is a registered trademark of DivX, Inc.

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Samsung HL-R5078W 50-inch 1080p HDTV With Digital Cable Ready Tuner

MSRP: \$3,499.99

www.samsung.com



Award-Winning Performance

Samsung TVs with DLP™ technology from Texas Instruments take HDTV to the next level with Samsung's sixth-generation Cinema Smooth™ 1080p light engine-based lineup of high-performance displays. Samsung's innovative DNIe™ technology delivers a crisp, lifelike picture that's closer to film, and there's never any risk of burn-in or uneven screen aging. Available in 50-, 56-, 61-, and 71-inch screen sizes, Samsung's 1080p series of HDTVs are engineered to display the full HDTV experience, down to each and every nuance of picture detail that has been captured, broadcast, and received in HDTV.

Cinema-Smooth 1080p Gen-6 Light Engine

Samsung's Cinema Smooth light engine brings together the right optics, electronic circuitry, and replaceable light source to create a brilliant picture that's more lifelike and much closer to film. Samsung's sixth generation (Gen-6) Cinema Smooth light engines release the maximum power of DLP microdisplays for a remarkably film-like picture.

Faster Color Wheel

Samsung's 2.6-inch color wheel spins at 10,800rpm for smooth fast-motion video, and it has seven color segments

first glimpse

Special Product Section



for more accurate colors. It achieves film-like transitions without the pixel breakup found in slower color-wheel designs and slower-switching LCD microdisplays. Air Bearing technology also makes it whisper quiet.

Next-Generation DLP Chips

Samsung's DLP TVs employ the latest DMD (Digital Micromirror Devices). These new-generation microdisplays have switching speeds twice as fast as previous generations and up to 1,000 times faster than competing microdisplay technologies. When combined with Samsung's new Cinema Smooth 1080p light engine, the result is a crisp, bright picture with deep, rich colors that are closer to film.

SAMSUNG

JVC KT-3000 SIRIUS Plug and Play Tuner

MSRP: \$150

www.jvc.com

Pause, Rewind & Fast Forward Broadcasts

A new SIRIUS PnP (Plug and Play) tuner from JVC allows you to pause, rewind, and fast forward programming. The new JVC KT-PK3000, which you can use in vehicles, at home, or with a dedicated JVC boom box, is JVC's latest generation PDA-sized SIRIUS satellite radio.

What sets the KT-PK3000 apart from earlier JVC PnP models is its ability to pause, rewind, or replay more than 40 minutes of programming, providing listeners with a new level of flexibility and convenience. Its compact size makes it easy to move from one location to another, and it uses the same car kit, home kit, and boom box as JVC's current PnP model.

The KT-PK3000 boasts a vibrant LCD with a 6-line display, intuitive controls, and multiple menu options for further enhanced legibility and safety by minimizing distractions while driving.

You can set up to 30 stream presets using Memory Capture to store 20 favorite songs that you can search for in incoming channels anytime this feature is activated. You can lock or



first glimpse

Special Product Section



unlock all functions to ensure that your preferences remain intact until you decide it's time for a change.

The KT-PK3000's Jump button puts traffic, weather reports, or a favorite SIRIUS channel just one touch away. If you want to know what you'll hear next, just search ahead in a stream to see what artists, songs, or program will be featured on any SIRIUS channel.

Additional features include a dimmer/contrast control, channel skip capability, auto shutdown, sleep timer, and wireless remote control.

JVC
The Perfect Experience /

first glimpse

Special Product Section

Kodak EasyShare One
MSRP: \$599
www.kodak.com/go/easyshare



The World's First Wi-Fi Consumer Digital Camera

The Kodak EasyShare One—the world's first Wi-Fi consumer camera—gives you the ability to send email from the camera; connect to the Kodak EasyShare Gallery at home and on the go from thousands of hotspots worldwide; store up to 1,500 of your favorite pictures; and optimize viewing and operation via its unique touch screen and graphical menus. It's the ultimate picture sharing device, redefining the digital photography experience.

Email, Upload, View & Share Pictures At Hotspots Worldwide

Kodak is working with the world's leading wireless hotspot companies to make sharing pictures across town, across the country, or across the globe as easy and convenient as possible. When visiting a hotspot, EasyShare One camera users can effortlessly send pictures with personal messages via email,

upload pictures to the EasyShare Gallery (www.kodakgallery.com), and view and share existing Gallery albums—all without a computer.

From Point & Shoot To Point & Share

Kodak designed the EasyShare One model (Kodak WI-FI® Card) specifically for sharing, moving the camera experience from "point and shoot" to "point and share." It incorporates multiple benefits that avid picture sharers could only dream of until now, including:

- Email and online picture sharing without a computer using a direct, wireless connection to the Kodak EasyShare Gallery service. By connecting to the Gallery through a compatible home, hotspot or public network, people can upload pictures and videos for near instantaneous electronic sharing with friends around the world.

first glimpse

Special Product Section



- On-the-spot sharing of up to 1,500 favorite pictures, synchronized with a person's PC-based picture collection, thanks to a huge, 3-inch, high-resolution, rotating LCD touchscreen that's protected when not in use, plus a generous 256MB of internal memory. In addition, when connected wirelessly to the Kodak EasyShare Gallery, EasyShare One camera owners can also view thousands more of their pictures stored online, including albums shared by their friends and family.
- Significantly enhanced ease-of-use for picture sharing and taking, including the ability to create on-camera albums to store pictures, intuitive menu options with touchscreen selection, automatic organization of pictures by date taken, and even richer, graphical scene modes to help get the best possible picture in a variety of outdoor and indoor environments. The dynamic user interface was developed in Macromedia Flash, a first for digital cameras.

- Wireless picture printing featuring Kodak Perfect Touch Technology when used with the new Kodak EasyShare Printer Dock Plus Series 3 or Photo Printer 500 (optional Kodak WI-FI card required for the printer).

The innovative Kodak EasyShare digital photography system—consisting of cameras, viewers, software, docks, home snapshot printers, services, papers, and accessories—makes taking, organizing, sharing, and printing high-quality digital pictures effortless. More information on Kodak EasyShare products is available at www.kodak.com/go/EasyShare.

Kodak



Vantage's InFusion Family

The InFusion family includes several products including a new controller and software.

The InFusion Controller is unlike any other controller on the market today, boasting a dramatically faster processor, five RS-232 ports, a built-in Ethernet jack, and a USB port. It more than doubles the capacity of Vantage's Q Master, allowing for more than 100 available wired stations and 300 wireless stations.

"The InFusion Controller and Design Center make lighting control and integration of audio video products much easier and quicker for the dealer," said Vantage Executive Vice President Richard Brady. "We have always found new ways to improve lighting control, and now with the new controller, we're simplifying the entire home automation experience."

InFusion Design Center, the software that accompanies the InFusion Controller, is designed around the dealers'

needs. It includes third-party device libraries with easy drag-and-drop menus, making integration of audio/video solutions much easier. InFusion Design Center has savable and reusable customized programming, and it makes complex automation scenarios simple, cutting installation time significantly.

TouchPoint Touchscreens

Vantage Controls' TouchPoint family welcomed two new additions recently: the TouchPoint 890HD and the TouchPoint 1210HD. Vantage's new touchscreens give users complete control of lights, audio/video, and temperature, and they even offer Internet capabilities while supporting streaming media and Web browsing.

first glimpse

Special Product Section



Vantage InFusion, TouchPoint & Keypads

MSRPs: InFusion Controller: \$2,498;
TouchPoint Touchscreen: \$6,000 to \$7,500;
Keypads: \$100 to \$500
www.vantagecontrols.com

The TouchPoint 890HD and the TouchPoint 1210HD are 9-inch and 12-inch high-definition, in-wall touchscreens—the first HD touchscreens on the market—that are ideal for any control and automation solution.

"Touchscreens are such a central part of today's control systems," said Brady. "Dealers have been looking for a time-tested lighting control company to include touchscreens into its entire system. With the TouchPoint family, we're giving dealers what they want; touchscreens with superior lighting control and easy integration of third-party solutions."

Vantage touchscreens are specifically designed to simplify today's complicated control and automation applications, while giving Vantage dealers a central place to fulfill all of their home automation and lighting control needs. They provide a simple, impressive way to control your automated home, office, or building.

Keypads

The Keypad Stations quickly and easily connect to the Vantage system on a simple, nonpolarized, two-wire bus.

Keypad options can include an infrared receiver with no visible lens. This option facilitates remote control without marring the clean look of the faceplate. Keypad styles are available in several colors and button configurations.

Choose between four different button styles to complement any keypad combination: SquareTouch, FineTouch, EasyTouch, and BriteStyle.


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music & movies

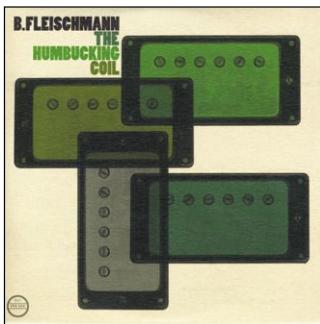
music

BY SAM EVANS

B. Fleischman

• AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 21 • PRICE: \$15.98

THE HUMBUCKING COIL [Morr Music]



To grasp the point Fleischman is making with this album, we must understand the album title itself. For those of us who don't have a dictionary of musical terms handy, a humbucking coil is a type of guitar pickup that was invented roughly 50 years ago by an employee at Gibson guitars. It consists of two magnets of opposite polarity. These magnets cancel white noise from other electronic devices, so the sound produced is the pure vibration of the guitar string.

Though "The Humbucking Coil" doesn't feature virtuosic guitar solos (in fact don't be surprised if you don't notice a guitar on the entire album), it focuses on a pure musical sound and statement. "Broken Monitors" is a spacey intro that shows shades of Sigur Ros, and the final song, "Aldebaran Waltz," ebbs and flows pleasantly as instruments are added and phased out throughout the song.

Throw this CD in your player and kick back. Close your eyes and focus on the musical subtleties suggested on "The Humbucking Coil." You'll be glad you did.

Metal Hearts

• AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 21 • PRICE: \$11.98

SOCIALIZE [Suicide Squeeze Records]



It's a tad ironic that the first track on this album is titled "Socialize," considering that's the last thing we felt like doing after giving it a listen. Not that listening to this album will make you lock the doors and pull the shades, but keep a pillow handy; the simple, soothing melodies and repetitive percussion and harmonies will make your eyelids heavy. If you aren't lulled by the instrumentation you'll be moved by the lyrics to tracks such as "Midnight's Sun." Socialize is the band's first widely available album, but the creativity and musical experimentation implemented in it suggest the Metal Hearts have found an avenue to travel in music for some time to come.

Head Like A Kite

• AVAILABLE: FEBRUARY 21 • PRICE: \$11

RANDOM PORTRAITS OF THE HOME MOVIE [Pattern 25 Records]

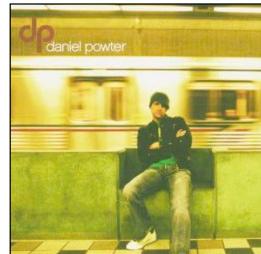


A solo offering by Sushirobo guitarist Dave Einmo (produced by Brian Deck of Modest Mouse and Red Red Meat, among others), Head Like A Kite's debut "Random Portraits Of The Home Movie" samples audio snippets of Einmo's own home movies shot on Super 8 reels and mixes them with attention-grabbing drum beats and odd, yet likeable melodies. The album is more than audio from family reunions and T-ball games, though; it's a trip-hop record that achieves its out-of-the-ordinary feel by incorporating unique and enjoyable instrumentation such as the mellotron and koto. He is joined on tracks by Clay Martin (Sushirobo), Graig Markel (Crooked Fingers), Asya (Smoosh), and others.

Daniel Powter

• AVAILABLE: JANUARY 24 • PRICE: \$18.98

DANIEL POWTER [Warner Bros.]



Though the name Daniel Powter isn't on American's lips yet, that may soon change with the release of his self-titled album. Already making waves in Europe with singles from this record, the debut album from this Canadian-born artist will give Americans a taste of what they've been missing. Powter's style, which resembles a hybrid of Keane and Jason Mraz, is infectiously optimistic, even poppy. We dare you not to tap your toe or sing along to "Bad Day."

movies

BY VINCE COGLEY

Must Love Dogs

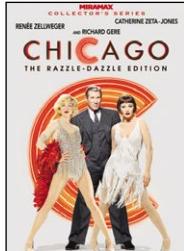
RATING: PG-13 • AVAILABLE: NOW • PRICE: \$28.98



"Must Love Dogs" stars the underappreciated Diane Lane ("Unfaithful," "Under the Tuscan Sun") as a recently-divorced teacher struggling in Dating 101 again. She pairs with the versatile John Cusack ("Say Anything," "Grosse Pointe Blank," "High Fidelity"), who plays Jake, a neurotic boat builder. The two go through the usual relationship rigmarole, adapting to each other's quirks and overcoming hurt feelings. Christopher Plummer buttresses the film as Lane's father, and Dermot Mulroney ("My Best Friend's Wedding") stirs the pot as the separated (not divorced) father of one of Lane's pupils. The quirky "The Truth About Cats and Dogs" is a more appealing romantic/pet comedy, but "Must Love Dogs" doesn't belong in the dog house.

Chicago: Razzle-Dazzle Edition

RATING: PG-13 • AVAILABLE: NOW • PRICE: \$29.99



"Chicago" took the film world by storm in early 2003 and rode its success to six Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Catherine Zeta-Jones). Set in the roaring '20s, "Chicago" follows Velma Kelly (Zeta-Jones) and Roxie Hart (Renée Zellweger), a starlet and wannabe starlet, respectively, whose paths cross when both land in the clink for murder. It's tempting to say one of the trio of Zeta-Jones, Zellweger, and Richard Gere (shyster Billy Flynn) steals the show, but they gel (not to mention sing and dance) surprisingly well. The Razzle-Dazzle Edition includes extended musical performances, commentary from Director Rob Marshall and Screenwriter Bill Condon, and Zeta-Jones' and Queen Latifah's deleted duet.

Transporter 2

RATING: PG-13 • AVAILABLE: JAN. 10 • PRICE: \$29.98



In the spirit of "The Bourne Identity" and "Ronin," Louis Leterrier's "The Transporter" had a distinctly European feel and showcased lead actor Jason Statham ("Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels," "Snatch") as a bona fide action hero. Statham returns as Frank Martin for the sequel, so expect another explosive go 'round. "Transporter 2" abandons the European locale for sunny Miami and finds

Martin as a U.S. government official's chauffeur. When kidnappers make off with the official's son, Martin quickly returns to "business as usual." Newcomer Kate Nauta plays Lola, a scantly-clad, femme-fatale assassin who attempts to foil Martin's efforts. Leterrier leaves subtlety on the cutting room floor, providing enough fight scenes and car chases to satisfy the most discriminating action film aficionado.

Frightfully Good Flicks**The Brothers Grimm**

• AVAILABLE: NOW • PRICE: \$29.99



Director Terry Gilliam puts an ironic spin on the lives of two of our most beloved childhood storytellers. The film paints Wilhelm (played by Matt Damon and Heath Ledger) as 18th century con-men who swindle rustic villagers with the ruse of ridding their hamlets of an assortment of ghouls. When a bona fide supernatural force terrorizes a quiet, unassuming hamlet, Will and Jake realize they'll need more than their usual parlor tricks to emerge victorious. Monica Bellucci ("The Matrix Reloaded," "The Passion of the Christ") fans will be pleased to see the versatile actress has a small, but pivotal role. It's a good blend of humor, action, and not-too-scary moments that most older children shouldn't find too creepy.

Red Eye

RATING: PG-13 • AVAILABLE: JAN. 10 • PRICE: \$29.99



Seasoned Director Wes Craven established himself with films such as "The Nightmare on Elm Street" and "Scream," so it shouldn't come as shock that he takes his talents to the sky in this aerial thriller. Up-and-coming actress Rachel McAdams ("The Notebook," "Wedding Crashers") convincingly stars as Lisa, a hotel desk manager returning home on a late-night flight. The flight quickly turns from pedestrian to petrifying when her next-seat neighbor Jackson (Cillian Murphy of "28 Days Later") reveals he's involved in a terrorist conspiracy to assassinate a high-ranking government official. The tension is palpable, but McAdams provides a believable performance in a film with its share of unbelievable moments. "Red Eye" proves Craven can succeed at frightening audiences without ratcheting up the gore factor.

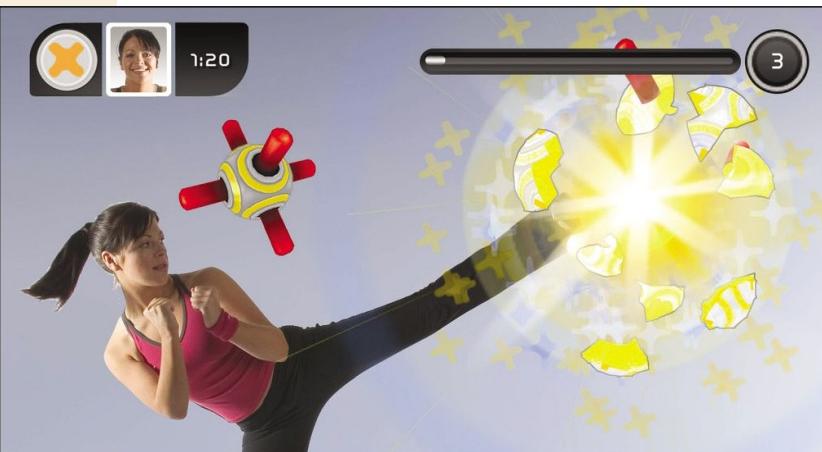
games .

for you and the people in your life

BY VINCE COGLEY

EyeToy: Kinetic

• PRICE: \$49.99 (INCLUDES EYETOY ACCESSORY)



RATING



PlayStation 2

When we featured "Yourself! Fitness" (page 105 of *CE Lifestyles* March 2005), we hoped the game's innovative approach to personal fitness would spread to other game developers. Less than a year later Sony Computer Entertainment fulfilled our hopes by building a better mousetrap. EyeToy: Kinetic offers custom exercise routines

suitable for beginners, personal trainer wannabes, and everyone in between. More of a comprehensive workout assistant than a video game, EyeToy: Kinetic uses the Eye Toy accessory to capture your motions in real time on your TV.

Two distinct, digital personal trainers (a male/female duo)

encourage you to meet your goals and chide you if you miss a session to catch this week's episode of "Grey's Anatomy." Designed to appeal to a number of interests, EyeToy: Kinetic features elements of aerobics, kick boxing, yoga, modern dance, and Tai Chi. We can't think of a more effective personal trainer for our money.

• SONY • WWW.EYETOYKINETIC.COM

Mario Kart DS

• PRICE: \$34.99



Game Cube

This could be the most original installment of Nintendo's ubiquitous plumber's racing game yet. The basic premise remains the same as other Mario Kart titles: Pick your favorite character from the Super Mario Brothers universe and compete in no-holds-barred go-kart racing action. You can use the Nintendo DS's Wi-Fi capabilities to challenge up to seven of your friends. Grand Prix, Time Trials, Versus, Battle, and Missions modes provide hours of battery-draining fun.

• NINTENDO • WWW.NINTENDO.COM

Nickelodeon SpongeBob SquarePants Keyboard• WWW.KIDZMOUSE.COM • PRICE: \$29.95

Kids are computing so early these days it sometimes seems as though their first steps are from a LeapPad to Mommy's computer. And what better place to put those sticky little hands than on a SpongeBob keyboard (\$29.95; www.kidzmouse.com)? This real keyboard keeps things simple by leaving out the keys kids never use. (Who needs a Scroll Lock key, anyway?) Also, many kids leave their fingers too long on the keys while they're looking for the next one to press, so the SpongeBob keyboard won't repeat a character until the key is pressed again. The board works with PCs and Macs with either PS/2 or USB connections. All a child will care about, of course, is that it has SpongeBob on it.

**Merconnet SONO**• WWW.MERCONNET.COM • PRICE: \$149.99

iPods are great and all, but sometimes you just want to take your music with you, not a set of headphones. Think of the SONO as a portable AM/FM radio that can also play music from your PC (\$149.99; www.merconnet.com/product_info.php?products_id=495). Through a simple wireless connection, the SONO will let you listen to whatever is playing on your computer—MP3s, Internet radio stations, audiobooks, CDs, and so on. If you've set up playlists of your favorite tunes for various moods, as we have, now you can hear them anywhere in the house. It sure beats the old-fashioned method of cranking up your PC speakers really loud.

Women In Business Shuttle• WWW.WIBBAGS.COM • PRICE: \$29.99

Never let an ugly, bulky notebook bag dictate your style. Take charge with a fashionable alternative such as the Shuttle folio (\$29.99; www.wibbags.com/shuttle3.html). It's part of the Women In Business line from Francine Sears, whose company, Fabrique, has long supplied protective bags to Dell and other computer giants. (Check out the Company Profile links for her inspiring story.) There's room for a 17-inch laptop inside the expandable Shuttle, as well as cables and other accessories in its modular pouches. It comes with a detachable, matching purse in scarlet red, very pink, steel blue, and, of course, the über-neutral black. Consider this one a gift to yourself.

... & gifts

on the lighter side of technology

BY MARTY SEMS

what they're SAYIN'

BY KATHRYN DOLAN

CE devices ranging from iPod nanos to 50-inch flat-panel HDTVs dominated lists and sales again during the 2005 holiday shopping season. We wondered if the trend would continue through Valentine's Day. Typically considered a more personal and intimate holiday, we weren't sure what to expect when we asked four women what they intended to give their sweeties.

ANN AUTH

MOTHER

Although she teaches a physical therapy class one day a week at a nearby university, Ann is mostly a stay-at-home mommy. She doesn't consider herself terribly techie, but Ann uses her computer to email various groups she's set up, including Bible study, dinner and book clubs, playgroups, and a mom's group.

When we asked her about buying CE products as gifts, Ann immediately thought of her youngest sister Madeline. Ann gave Madeline an iPod for her eighth-grade graduation last spring. Madeline's pretty tech-savvy, and she loves using different programs to make cards on her computer. She created the birth announcement for Ann's baby, too, so she'd definitely give Madeline more CE-related gifts.

If she were going to give herself a gift, Ann says she'd buy a Palm TX because she'd love to have the Internet connectivity on-the-go, and she likes all of the features.

For Valentine's Day, Ann says, "I'd like to give my husband something really romantic and intimate—specifically, I'm thinking of electric nose-hair clippers because I don't like getting poked by the bristly hairs when he kisses me." She says he wants a flat-screen HDTV, and they've talked about getting one. The only room that could accommodate it is the living room, though, and they'd

have to tear out their bookcases, which Ann doesn't want to do. Nose-hair clippers it is!

LESLEY SCHER

EMPTY-NESTER

Lesley Scher, 44, is an empty-nester and nanny to her two young nieces. In her upstairs office, Lesley spends about three to four hours a day on her desktop participating in online book groups, reading and sending email, checking WeatherBug, managing photos at the Kodak EasyShare Gallery (formerly Ofoto), maintaining her blog and reading those of friends and family, shopping online, and ripping songs from CDs to transfer to her iPod, which she uses daily.

Although she doesn't pay bills through online banking, she checks account balances and makes sure scheduled deposits have been made.

Lesley says she'd consider giving her 22-year-old daughter Amy, who's in college in Texas, a digital camera, but she's not sure how much she'd use it. Instead, Lesley says, she'll probably give Amy a gift card for iTunes because she'd most definitely use that.

As for her husband of 19 years, Lesley says there's no point even trying to give him a CE device for *any* holiday because he buys the gadgets for himself as soon as they're available. She's also not sure about such a gift for Valentine's Day because they exchange cards and sometimes little gifts, but they almost always forgo a more expensive gift exchange in favor of going out for a nice, quiet dinner, just the two of them.





What people in your life would you give a CE product to as a gift? Are you planning to give one to your significant other for Valentine's Day?

ANNA HAUPTMANN

BUSINESS WOMAN

At 31, Anna Hauptmann is the Director of Operations and Marketing at Velocity Sports Performance, which designs training and fitness programs for athletes and nonathletes of all ages and skill levels, in Mahwah, N.J. Fortunately, living where she does in Ringwood, N.J., Anna doesn't have much of a commute: a mere 12 miles.

Anna loves all kinds of electronic gadgets, and she can think of numerous family members upon whom she'd bestow them as gifts. Anna says, "I think everyone except my grandmother would enjoy a CE product as a gift. My nephews would love a video game console, my sister needs an iPod, my dad needs a TiVo, and I need a new phone. I'd like a BlackBerry, actually."

Anna pretty much has to draw the line, though, when it comes to her significant other, electronic devices, and Valentine's Day. She's fairly certain dinner and something romantic would be far more well-received. However, Anna concedes she's not as smitten with the mischievous winged cherub and his quiver of arrows, "Me? I'm less romantic and would *love* to have something cool to make my life easier or more fun."



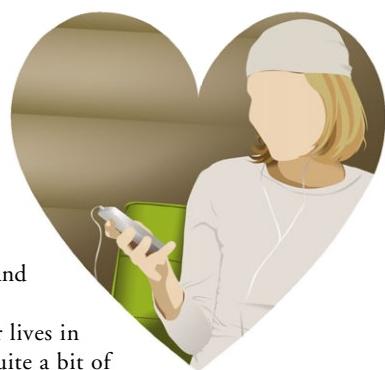
EMILY JANDA

GRADUATE STUDENT

College Station, Texas, is home to 27-year-old Ph.D. candidate Emily Janda. When she's not studying, she burns up her keyboard writing emails to friends and family who are scattered around the world.

Emily's little sister lives in Baltimore and did quite a bit of traveling over the holidays last year, so Emily gave her a 2GB iPod nano for Christmas. She decided on the nano because it's easy to control and would hold enough songs to get her sister through a four-hour flight, and she knows her sister will continue using it for workouts and when she commutes between work and home. The \$199 price tag was a little steep for her grad-student budget, but Emily knew her sister would get a lot of use out of it.

Last year, Emily herself received Memory Sticks and a memory book of pictures for Valentine's Day, and she intends to give her sweetheart an equally memorable gift this year. She's planning to give him an external hard drive, so he'll have storage to accommodate more of his music collection. She's buying herself an additional 512MB Memory Stick because, as she says, "The holiday is one of memorable moments!"



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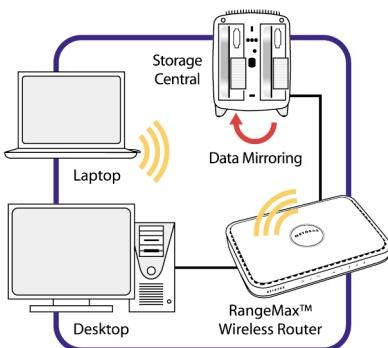
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